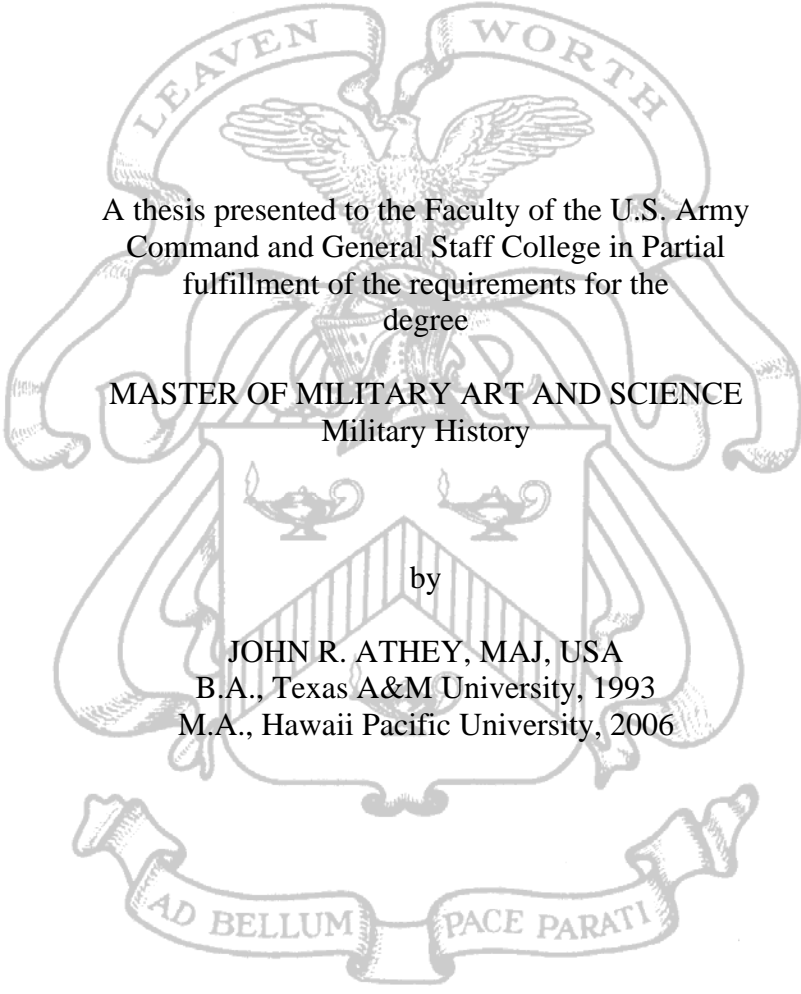


GROUNDHOG DAY: EXPECTATION MANAGEMENT BY EXAMINING
WARFARE IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY BALKANS



A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army
Command and General Staff College in Partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree

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Military History

by

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ABSTRACT

GROUNDHOG DAY: EXPECTATION MANAGEMENT BY EXAMINING WARFARE IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY BALKANS, by MAJ John R. Athey, 107 pages.

Modern military leaders require solid information, with broad background knowledge, to operate in some of the world's most complex cultures. In the Balkan Peninsula, the overlapping demands of religion, ethnic loyalties, and selfish power-politics are ongoing challenges to any military operation in the region. History leading up to the Twentieth century contained numerous conflicts between nations on the peninsula and the first 50 years of the Twentieth century contained four additional major conflicts. Thus, this research examines the participants of the Balkan War I, Balkan War II, World War I, and World War II, notes the causes of each and describes the results. By extrapolating lessons learned from examining earlier conflicts and comparing those lessons to the actions of these four modern conflicts, this research demonstrates that historical norms are possible to predict. These conclusions stand up to the examples provided by the modern dissolution conflicts in the former Yugoslavia. Based on the conclusions of this research, decision makers should examine the history of an area prior to conducting operations and, in the case of the Balkans, limit their expectations of successful progress as defined by the West.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE THESIS APPROVAL PAGE	ii
ABSTRACT.....	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iv
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.....	vi
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
The Goals	1
The Challenges.....	3
Definition of the Timeline	4
Definitions in Usage	6
Conclusion	7
CHAPTER 2 BACKGROUND HISTORY: WHEN WILL THE PEACE RETURN?	9
Geographical Reference.....	9
The First Millennium	12
Setting the Stage: The Bulgarian Kingdom	15
The Next Conquerors: The Serbian Kingdom	16
The Kingdom of Serbia.....	19
The Ottoman Conquest: 1300-1600.....	23
The Osmanli: Early History	23
Background Analysis.....	29
CHAPTER 3 BALKAN NATIONALISM AND WORLD WAR I.....	33
Crisis Based Fragmentation	33
The Tempest in the Teapot	37
The Pot Boils Over: The First Balkan War.....	41
The Second Balkan War	44
The Great War in the Balkans.....	45
Failed Diplomacy and Dissolution.....	48
Analysis: The Bottom Line before the Interwar Period.....	49
CHAPTER 4 INTERWAR FAILURE AND WORLD WAR II.....	54
Diplomatic Debacle	58
The Road to World War II.....	58
The Initial War	60

The Results.....	63
The Occupation.....	65
Postwar Yugoslavia	70
Analysis: The Bottom Line for Pre- and Post-WWII Years	72
CHAPTER 5 THE FINAL SOLUTION.....	78
Dissolutions in the 1990s: Slovenia.....	80
Dissolutions in the 1990s: Macedonia	82
Dissolutions in the 1990s: Croatia	83
Dissolutions in the 1990s: Bosnia.....	85
Dissolutions in the 1990s: Republic of Srpska's Attempt	87
Kosovo Attempts at Dissolution (1990-Present)	88
Kosovo Attempts at Dissolution: Recent, but Pre-Terror History	89
Kosovo Attempts at Dissolution: During and Post-Strike History	91
Dissolution in 2006: Montenegro	93
Analysis of Modern Nations in the Balkans	93
Comparison of Modern Results to Historical Analysis	94
BIBLIOGRAPHY	101
INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST	106
CERTIFICATION FOR MMAS DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT	107

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	Page
Figure 1. Eastern Mediterranean Region.....	10
Figure 2. Map with the Danube River Marked in Red.....	11
Figure 3. Campaign in the Balkans (1941).....	62
Figure 4. The Axis-Dominated Balkans, 1941-1944	64

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The likelihood of successfully conquering and holding any portion of the Balkan Peninsula is directly proportional to the power of the new government and its success in imposing its will on the culture and education of the people. The Balkan Peninsula experienced four major wars during the period of 1900-1950. To researchers examining other regions, this could seem excessive. However, the Balkan Peninsula is a complicated place. The nations in place today are dissimilar to the governing structures of any preceding period. With a few exceptions, this is true of every political structure that has ruled the Balkan Peninsula since the time of the ancient Greeks. The cultures of the people that live in the Peninsula are equally mixed. This mixture results from, first, the frequent change in national organizations, second, how they came to govern their region and, finally, the practices of the incoming government. Thus, this paper will examine these four conflicts, determine the results of each, and attempt to determine how each conflict influenced future developments of nations, cultures, and new conflicts. Once these determinations are made, this monograph will draw conclusions for a U.S. military leader. The purpose is to facilitate intelligent decisions by modern leaders and enable effective expectation management for results of military operations in the region.

The Goals

This work is both a survey and an analysis of the warfare trends in the region of the Former Republic of Yugoslavia and how those regions interacted with their neighboring states during these fifty years. Because of such a high number of conflicts in

such a short period, the area is optimal for observing the effects of various types of fighting. Within this controlled environment, we have a large sample, experimentally controlled in this assessment by geography and population. Within one peninsula, we have a fixed geographical region, a fixed set of populations, as well as valuable terrain, tumultuous history and natural resources that encouraged these wars. Because of this, it should be possible to determine some causes and effects as well as to make educated predictions about the future of the region.

It is obviously possible to describe the origins of these conflicts. Many historians have done so in the past. The “real cause” of wars seems to be a favorite topic of historians; over one hundred books exist arguing various viewpoints of what *really* started World War I, for example. Thus, this paper will not readdress that element, but will rather just note that they did begin, describe the current prevailing viewpoint and assume it is correct enough for the purpose of setting the context and providing basic background of the conflict. Rather, this work will discover if there is some link between the peace preceding the armed conflict and the ferocity of the fighting. Second, following each war, the method of reaching peace may give some indication of how long the peace may last. It seems reasonable to determine that how a state was created may determine its longevity. For example, the creation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes through diplomatic agreement holds the record for the shortest-lived state. Finally, this work will attempt to determine the relationship between the peace ante bellum and the peace that came after the fighting. It will examine whether the population is better off if it has a better government or if it has merely gained new sources of instability and cultural hatreds. And, because it has such special impact, the paper will describe the effects of

either changing or failing to change the religious beliefs and the historical myths of the population that has come under new management. The goal will be to enable a modern leader to determine what worked and what did not work and allow them the best opportunity to succeed while managing results expectations.

The Challenges

There are some issues with a review of this scale. Specifically, with the roots of some of these conflicts beginning as far back as the 8th century, detailed analysis of such a long era becomes difficult. Fortunately, general knowledge is readily available for the purposes of review. Therefore, this project will touch very briefly on control of the area by the Macedonians, the Persians, the Greeks, and then the Romans and attempt to describe, very briefly, the Illyrian people. Then, without spending too much time, this work will “set the stage” of the governing structures and religious beliefs that were in place on the peninsula beginning at A.D. 1000, before reviewing important historical events in the period between A.D.1000 and A.D.1700.

The other difficulty lies in the inability of the author to read sufficient non-English sources to examine the historical records directly. Prior to the beginning of the last decade, the availability of English-language periodicals on the Balkans was limited. The intervention of western nations into the turmoil of changing governing structures in the central Balkan nation of what was then Yugoslavia has changed this and recent works are broadly available in English. With a project of this scope, this will be a smaller problem than it might be as the majority of sources will be secondary. Nevertheless, in any case, it is important to recognize the issue. Additionally, as the majority of the English language sources are written by émigré Serbs or their offspring, this will add an

undeniable slant to some of the “facts” presented here. The creation of historical myths through ethnicity-biased writing is a major issue in researching this region. However, without the time or capability to do extensive primary source research in archives located primarily in the Balkans, this survey will utilize the solid body of historical writing available.

Definition of the Timeline

For the length of this paper, one must break the 50 years of history down and group them into portions that are more manageable. And, as mentioned, a significant portion of this work must be historical summary instead of in-depth analysis of previous nations and conflicts. In an effort to be brief, after merely describing the events prior to A.D. 1000, this work will not address the first four major ruling states: the Macedonians, the Persians, the Greeks, or the Romans.

Chapter 2 describes the period after the Romans, but before 1600. It includes the period of control by the Byzantines that set the standard from which the dissolution into separate state-kingdoms commenced. In that period, first the Bulgarian Kingdom and then the Serbian Kingdom each ruled the majority of the peninsula, outside of Constantinople itself, for a significant period. Because they differed in how they conquered and ruled, the conflicts were distinct from the period when the Ottomans dominated. The domination of the area by the Ottomans began in 1300. While the Ottoman Empire ruled the Peninsula until the Empire declined in the 1800s, the conquest and establishment of the government was complete by 1600. Thus, little detail is required during the years 1600-1800. Chapter 2, taken as a whole, will provide the background required to understand the roots of these four conflicts.

Chapters 3 and 4 are the examination of the period during which joint control by the Ottomans and the Austro-Hungarian Empire broke down through the results of World War II. These sections are the core of the paper and describe the erosion of Ottoman control via revolution, in the case of the Greeks, Great Power intervention in other cases, and subsequent Balkan-originated diplomatic maneuvering through the two World Wars. These chapters begin with a section describing how the situation leading up to 1900 came into being. Because the Greek revolution proceeded the period addressed in this thesis, it also will not be addressed in depth, but will be described in the first part of Chapter 3. The following portions describe, in more detail, the beginnings, the conduct, and the results of the four major conflicts of the period. The paper describes the participants of each war, explains why they started and details what happened. Following that is an explanation of how much land each nation lost, how many people they lost and, in some cases, what states were then formed, reformed, or dissolved. And, as mentioned, because it is so important in the modern era, the paper addresses the religions and ideologies that change in the region because of the warfare.

Finally, the conclusion, Chapter 5, will briefly concentrate on the period of Communist control in Yugoslavia and the subsequent “revolutions” through which that area again dissolved into small nation-states, each claiming greatness based on previous perceived domination of the various portions of the Peninsula region. This section includes a short examination of the terrorism occurring in the Twenty-first century as the region, again, fails to maintain stability in the face of differences in culture. Finally, to the extent possible, the conclusion will recap the lessons learned through examining the outcome of recent and current disputes on the Peninsula.

Definitions in Usage

This will be an historically oriented paper. In this paper, the length of the timeline could create confusion on the status of tribes or kingdoms or empires or nations or states in existence at various times in the Balkan Peninsula. In many works, both modern and ancient, great effort sometimes goes into definitions of the different types of governments and when the transition occurred from one to another. However, because this work is not a political science paper, these words will be used in an historical manner. If a referenced source describes the Ottoman Empire as a nation state, this work will not attempt to prove or disprove this assertion. Additionally, for ease of reading, this work will attempt to use historically relevant terms. Thus, the Ottoman Empire and the Austro-Hungarian Empire will be called empires exclusively, and the Kingdoms of Serbia and Bulgaria will be discussed as kingdoms until they reemerge from under the rule of the Ottoman Empire. The status of the kingdoms or nations or states is not germane to this discussion.

Second, any researcher discussing the Balkan Peninsula must address confusion stemming from multiple languages. Because there have been five to seven languages spoken and written on the Peninsula in the past 1000 years, there is regular disagreement as to what things and places should be called. Because the author is not a linguist, every attempt will be made to conform to modern names if possible. If it is not possible, because the two most prolific U.S. historical authors (Barbara Jelavic and L. S. Stavrianos) usually agree on names and languages, their usage shall be predominant.

Third, there are many definitions of where the Balkan Peninsula starts and stops. To contain the scope, this research examines the portion of the Balkan Peninsula around the Former Republic of Yugoslavia and its neighboring nations. This excludes Romania

and southern Hungary, but movement north and south of the river was often a defining characteristic of a tribe's modern nationality. Additionally, as this research revolves primarily around events since 1900, it excludes the important events in the Greek Revolution and the Great Power interaction and intervention that occurred during that period. In chapter 5, the focus will narrow even more specifically to the conflicts in the former Republic of Yugoslavia, as that is where modern conflicts have occurred where the lessons learned can be examined for validity.

Finally, the titles of ruling leaders are often the most obvious aspect of deconflicting languages. For the purposes of this work, this paper will attempt to transliterate titles into English language titles. Thus, Tsar Stephan Dushan will be called King Stephan Dushan. While "Tsar" is more accurate in terms of who has sworn fealty and what types of subordinate leaders fall under his reign, it is confusing to the average reader to switch between Tsar, King, Great Prince, etcetera when attempting to describe the historical backgrounds of these leaders. Because the focus of this thesis is in the 1900s, describing the differences to a reader is not an efficient use of the available space in this paper.

Conclusion

While "why" cannot always come from "what was", it is possible to make assessments about effectiveness. This project covers the four main conflicts occurring between A.D. 1900 and A.D. 1950 in the Balkan Peninsula. In this frame of reference, this paper will describe what started these wars, attempt to demonstrate how the conduct of the war related to the preceding peace, and then determine the results of the fighting. By looking at this information, with the benefit of historical perspective, this paper makes

judgments as to the effectiveness of the warfare techniques and attempts to detail the causes of problems in the areas of language, religion and ethnicity. It is a unique look, with an overview perspective, where a reader can see that a government that conducts warfare against its neighbors in the Balkans is ultimately doomed to repetition unless it executes an effective program to change the cultural education of the populace. While reading several general historical works might eventually provide a modern military leader with this insight, this monograph is specifically oriented on providing analysis of history rather than discovering new knowledge in the field. With a perspective specifically oriented towards a US military leader, this work will help those responsible for executing operations in the Balkan Peninsula make effective decisions that have a chance to have a positive influence in the region

CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND HISTORY: WHEN WILL THE PEACE RETURN?

An examination of history in the Balkan Region must begin with the geography, the ethnic composition and the manner in which the Byzantium Empire developed and then lost control of the Peninsula. A review of the history of this region is critical in assisting a modern leader to comprehend the perspective of the various ethnic groups. Without this basic background understanding, it is impossible to grasp the incredibly complex mélange of claim and counterclaim for dominance and land in the area. Before beginning however, a brief overview of the geography of the region and a summary history of the First Millennium A.D. is required.

Geographical Reference

Because a map is often so useful in understanding the locations being discussed, several are included here. Any delineation of political boundaries over 1000 years would be, of course, useless. For convenience, on the first map (below at Fig. 1), the political names reflect those of the early Third century. But, the importance of this area did not depend on which group was in charge of which area during which period. Instead, it is important to understand why so many different groups of people have attempted to control this small area and why it has been so challenging to do so.

The first geographical reason to control this region revolves around the navigable seas in the region. Because the majority of the early states located around the Mediterranean Sea conducted trade and lived off sea life, they developed navies early in their histories. Because movement by water was so much more efficient than going

overland, control of several key islands in Greece, Thracae and Macedonia was critical to the control of the eastern portion of the Mediterranean.



Figure 1. Eastern Mediterranean Region

Source: Dennis P. Hupchick, and Harold E. Cox, *The Palgrave Concise Historical Atlas of the Balkans* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), Map 6.

Additionally, the Dardanelles Strait, adjacent to Gallipoli, links the Sea of Marmora and the Bosphorus Strait from the Aegean Sea to the Black Sea. The Straits, less than 3/4 of a mile across at their narrowest, were the crossing points for numerous armies to invade from East to West, including Persia's Xerxes in 480 B.C. and Alexander the Great in 334 B.C.



Figure 2. Map with the Danube River Marked in Red

Source: *CIA World Fact Book* available from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html>.

The second geographical reason for controlling the Balkan Peninsula revolves around the difficulty of traveling in the mountainous areas. In the situations where a tribe did not develop early enough to become a naval nation along the edge of the

Mediterranean, those tribes were then forced to move across the extremely mountainous terrain. The extent of the mountains is more easily seen in figure 2. In the cases where tribes were fleeing from northern barbarian tribes, the mountains were extremely defensible for their self-preservation. Where there was no pressure for immigration, there were numerous navigable rivers that linked large areas of arable farming land to the Danube and its markets via the Black Sea or as far north as modern day Germany.

In a more political sense, nations have attempted to control the region for centuries in order to live there and take the available natural resources such as iron ore, asbestos and precious minerals. The Romans may have originally conquered it merely in order to expand their Empire. But, even then, the mountains were actively mined for raw resources. Later, since so many tribes have immigrated into the area due to external pressure, it has existed merely as an area to live safely. The ancient Greeks had as much right to live there as any ancient Romans, as did the Macedonians. Control of more has always been a goal of empire building nation states.

The First Millennium

While the first civilization of the Balkan Peninsula was arguably the Macedonians or the Greeks, the Roman Empire played huge roles during subsequent times. The Byzantine Empire was the major early empire from which most medieval structure developed. The occupation of the Balkan region by the Romans occurred in the 2nd and 1st Centuries B.C. Without going into any detail, we know that after A.D. 200 the western portion of the Roman Empire then went into a gradual decline over the next centuries. Following his success in briefly conquering and ruling a reunited Roman Empire in the Fourth century A.D., the Emperor Constantine the Great moved the capital

of the Roman Empire east to the European side of the Bosphorus Straits and founded Constantinople. Theodosius the Great, who died in 395, was the last Emperor to rule over a united Roman Empire. When he died, his territory was divided into western and eastern halves, each ruled by one of his sons as its own Emperor. In 441, Attila and the Huns invaded the Balkans and devastated the city of Naissus. This was followed in the West by the Goths who overran and claimed this portion of the Roman Empire in the 5th and 6th Centuries. By the end of the Fifth century, the Western Roman Empire had been destroyed by the barbarians, while the Eastern Roman Empire (known also as the Byzantine Empire) continued to thrive. After re-conquering large portions of the old Roman Empire, at the peak of Byzantium power around A.D. 560, Justinian I ruled the entire Mediterranean region from the massive city of Constantinople.

His empire began to decline very soon after his death. The Visigoths and the Lombards reasserted their sovereignty in northern Europe as the other tribes were pushed south into the Balkan region. With the attacks of the Avars into the mountains of the northern Balkan region, Slavic tribes began immigrating. The expansion of these groups of “barbarians” south and west resulted in heavy population of the Balkans by the Slavs coming behind the Avars as they fled the conquering tribes of Huns and Bulgars expanding from the north. Thus, the major influx of organized Slavic tribes to this region was in the Seventh century as the Eastern Roman Empire appeared to be disintegrating similar to the Western Empire. At its height, the Byzantine Empire consisted of parts or all of modern Turkey, Greece, Albania, Bulgaria, Serbia, Bosnia, Montenegro, Herzegovina, Croatia, Iraq, Iran, and most of northern Africa.

Nearly simultaneously, there was a coup d'état in Constantinople caused by the people's dissatisfaction with their losses in the west. Taking advantage of this, Chosroes II of Persia attacked from the south and, by 610, had conquered Mesopotamia. By A.D. 620, the Persians had conquered almost all of the territory east of and including Armenia. These losses brought another coup, which brought the Emperor Heraclius to power. Paying off the Avars to the north and relying on the walls of Constantinople to defend his capital, Emperor Heraclius marched his army south to ravage Persia for several years. However, after successfully re-conquering all of the Byzantine land, expansion to the south is halted in 636 when the large, organized Byzantine army met a Muslim army at the Battle of Yarmuk, in Syria, and was defeated. From that point on, the Byzantine Empire began slowly to shrink in size in the south as the new religion of Mohammed gained followers.

While the main effort of warfare occurred in the south, however, the Bulgarians, under tribal chieftain Asparouh, were successful in conquering almost the entire Balkan Peninsula. They did not, though, succeed in conquering Constantinople.

Thus, the population of the peninsula was made up of various tribal groups that had lived there since antiquity and then those who successively had been pushed further south from Europe. These tribal groups included ethnic Greeks, Macedonians and Illyrians (also known as the Dalmatians -- now approximately Slovenians and Croats) as well as the newer Avars (now Albanians), Slavs and Bulgars. At the beginning of the 2nd Millennium, in 1019, history tells of the recovery of the Byzantine Empire in the north. The Danube River was the zenith when Basil the Bulgar-Slayer captured the last Bulgarian fortress and, again, owned the whole of the Balkan Peninsula.

Setting the Stage: The Bulgarian Kingdom

Very little is known about the origin of the Bulgar people. Examination of their governing structures and calendar most often led modern scholars to believe that they were a sub-tribe of the Huns. Because such a large population advanced south prior to the major tribal movements of the Huns, another realistic scenario is that they were merely an Asiatic nomad tribe that had been conquered by the Huns at various times and adopted their techniques. For the purposes of this historical review, the exact origin is not critical. It is important to know that the group of Bulgars that entered the Balkan Peninsula were not native to the area and, as previously mentioned, began arriving beginning at the end of the Seventh century. After they successfully defeated Byzantine forces in 680, a peace treaty officially created “Great Bulgaria”. For approximately 140-150 years, the tribe grew into a respectable nation and then began to expand. Under the soldier-King Krum, the nation grew to encompass more of the Peninsula including a region (in what is now Albania) adjacent to the Adriatic and all of modern-day Romania. With the expansion to include more of the Peninsula, however, things began to change.

Missionaries from Constantinople had several impacts on the Bulgarians. At that point in their development, their language was believed to be distinctly Bulgarian and not related to the proto-Slavic languages of the time. The missionaries wrote the first Bulgarian language, changing it enough that it began to resemble the languages of the other peoples in the region. While there is disagreement as to his title, it is agreed that, in 864, Khan/Tsar (King) Boris I became a Christian and made Christianity the official religion of the Kingdom. And later, King Simeon I, a Byzantine educated ruler, eventually offered a serious threat to the Byzantines. Eventually, through a series of

campaigns, the Kingdom encompassed all of the Balkan Peninsula north of Constantinople and included most of Greece, though Serbian tribes continued to resist domination along the Adriatic coast. Though King Simeon I attempted to capture Constantinople, he was never successful. After his death in 927, his successors were unable to maintain his title of “King of the Bulgars and the Greeks” for long. Within 100 years, the Byzantines had managed to conquer the Peninsula again and resume their rule.

Thus, when the 2nd Millennium began, the majority of the region was made up predominantly of numerous tribes of Slavs (including the six Serbian tribes), Greeks and Bulgars who, until the end of the Tenth century, were ruled by Bulgarian leaders. The population of the Peninsula had become predominantly Christian, in the Byzantine manner, but the reintroduction of Byzantine rule was not, of course, popular.

The Next Conquerors: The Serbian Kingdom

The tribes of Slavic nomads, that began migrating south into the northern Balkan Peninsula under pressure from the Visigoths during the Fourth through the Sixth century, had a major characteristic that made them different than the other barbarians from the north. Unlike the Avars or the Huns, the Slavs were primarily an agricultural people and settled to stay instead of merely raid and leave. They arrived in such large numbers that they fully settled the regions north of the Danube and moved south into modern-day Serbia, Bosnia, and Croatia, to include the Adriatic Coast. Originally, they offered no resistance to pacification by the Byzantine Emperors. But, with the attempts at dominance by the Bulgarians, the six major Serbian tribes formed a quasi-united front and began to attempt to assert their own nationalism. Despite the success of the Bulgarians to take control of the majority of the peninsula in the last centuries of the First

Millennium, the far western portion managed to maintain its independence. Several of the tribes by that time had fallen under Bulgarian control. When the remaining tribes became desperate enough, they accepted the protection of the Byzantines rather than fall under the Bulgars. When Basil the Bulgar-Slayer succeeded in overthrowing the Bulgars south of the Danube, the dis-united Serbian tribes had spent the preceding centuries each being ruled by its own “prince.” Some of the princes ruled under Bulgarian authority, others under Byzantine. When, eventually, the entire region fell under Byzantine control, the various leaders of the separate tribes were no longer considered “princes”, but still held their positions within their tribes. But, Knez Vlastimir’s troubled and unstable dynasty, provider of the ruling tribal leader in the Raška region, finally failed entirely. Because the Raška region was where the first Serbian seat of government was established in the Seventh century, this tribe of Serbs was the most powerful. Thus, it was in this area that Časlav Klonimirović finally appealed to the Byzantine Emperor for economic assistance in exchange for surrendering sovereignty. Časlav was, thus, appointed the Grand Prince (colloquially known as Grand Zupan) of the Serbs prior to his death fighting to defend the northern reaches of modern-day Bosnia from the Magyar.

During these final years, the unification trend was greatly accelerated by several factors. First, the Bulgars and Byzantines provided an obvious and deadly external threat. This always has the effect of drawing dissimilar sub-groups within a group together despite their differences. Second, the actual attacks almost certainly had the usual effect of killing off the most militant of each tribe in the various regions. Thus, those remaining tribal members were more likely to be the ones who were able to compromise. Third, many of those who were unable to deal with the situation with the Bulgars and the

Byzantines fled from the Serbian region to the Roman/Croatian regions further west in the reported mass emigrations. This meant that a large part of the tribes with less to lose effectively abandoned the fight.

Because of these factors, at the turn of the Millennium, there was, effectively, a single leader of the Serbian nationality. Without discussing the lineage of the Grand Zupans that followed Časlav, which would be much better addressed in an historical work focused purely on Serbia, suffice it to say that his descendants did not continue to lead the principality of Serbia for the following century. In the 1100s, the western “branch” of the family gained dominance, but the fighting continued between the houses. Over these years, various Princes freed Serbia several times from Byzantine rule, only to have the Empire reassert dominance. This continued until approximately 1166 when Stephen Nemanja united the Serbian people into the Kingdom of Serbia. He successfully defeated Byzantine and Bulgarian forces to establish his borders and create his kingdom. His son, who reigned from 1196 to 1228, inherited an established kingdom with a powerful army system so that he needed no fighting to ensure his success. Because of the total instability of the Byzantine dynasties, the Serbian forces were able to operate without fear of attack from the south. When the Fourth Crusade in 1204, originally formed to free Jerusalem with an attack through Egypt, conquered and raped Constantinople, there was no longer any threat at all from Byzantine forces as the victorious Europeans set up new feudal states. Of the twenty-nine sieges launched against Constantinople, only nine attacks succeeded. The Fourth Crusade was the eighth time and resulted in short-lived changes in the area. While the Latin states lasted less than 50 years

before Byzantium was reestablished, this period marks the beginning of precipitous decline by the Byzantines.

Because of this, continued expansion was possible by the Nemanja dynasty and the remainder of Bulgaria came under Serbian rule by 1331. Following that victory, Stephen Dushan assumed the throne and soon brought Albania, Macedonia and the northern part of what is today Greece under his control. Declaring himself “Tsar of All Serbs, Albanians and Greeks’, he attempted to organize a crusade to complete the conquest of the Peninsula and Constantinople. Several sources indicate that he was making the attempt in order to fight against the Ottoman threat while others suppose he merely wanted to complete his efforts to rule all of the Balkans. But, due to his untimely death in 1355, he was not successful in either goal. His descendants held power in various cities as the Turkish forces accomplished the conquest of the peninsula for the Ottoman Empire, but his reign definitively marks the high-point of the Kingdom of Serbia.

The Kingdom of Serbia

The development of the governing structure in Serbia appeared to follow a fairly conventional, western establishment of agricultural kingdoms. In the Byzantine structure, the emperor maintained wealth, privilege, power, etcetera in his person at the top of a highly defined and very structured system. The imperial rank structure and office holding was defined by closeness to the Emperor. Despite early failures by family and supposed allies of the young Emperor Alexis II to overthrow him in 1184, success came later. Unfortunately, the power was squandered. During the next 20 years, numerous men held

the throne in Constantinople and the Serbians were able to take advantage of the situation.

The successful leadership of Serbian Prince Stephen Nemanja in establishment of power followed closely on the heels of the unsuccessful “Third Crusade” period.

Learning through experience that other empires existed that would be willing to assist in weakening the Byzantines, he began to lead an apparently successful resistance while Emperor Issac attempted to deal with Bulgaria’s simultaneous attempts to break free from Byzantine rule. In an attempt to resolve the situation, Eudocia, the Emperor’s niece, was offered as Stephen’s wife and they settle the fighting, apparently in 1193¹.

Over the next century and a half, Serbia continued to flourish. On 28 July 1330, King Stephen Deshanski met the might of Bulgaria and won the battle of Küstendil completing the subjugation of the Bulgars. Following the murder of his father, King Stephen Dushan completed the conquest of much of the peninsula.

Hungary, the mid-Danubian power, whose ambitious designs frequently threatened Serbia, was just then absorbed in its struggle with Venice for the possession of the Adriatic coast; Bulgaria, already reduced to vassalage, was completely helpless; and the remaining Balkan power of any dignity, the Byzantine empire [*sic*], was plagued with every disease of a dying state²

With his kingdom doubled in size and vibrant, he turned his mind to social structuring.

As in most western regions at the time, the involvement of religion in the lives of people was very strong. With an eye towards claiming the title of ruler of the peninsula, as the Byzantines had done before him, Dushan proclaimed the Serbian Archbishop, who had been autonomous since the start of the Thirteenth century, to be Patriarch in 1346.

The Serbian Patriarch, seated at Ipek, then considered himself the equal of the Constantine and the Greek Patriarchs to the south. Once this was complete, Stephen had

himself crowned King of the Serbs and Greeks and established his capital at Skopje (Uskub), Macedonia, on the main north-south river route, the Vardar.

Despite dying an early death at 46 in 1355, Dushan's accomplishments point to him as not only a great military leader but also a keen administrative leader. In 1349, he published the *Zakonik*, his famous code of laws. This code is often the example modern Serbians use to demonstrate the early sophistication of Serbian culture and government. It certainly highlights changes that took place to advance the Serbians from the influx of the early Slav barbarian tribes that appeared 800 years earlier.

Examining the state Dushan created, several things are immediately obvious. First, the greatest single change was the inclusion of Orthodox Christianity. Second, obviously using the Byzantine Empire as the model, the sovereign was the originator of law. However, the powers of the "great dignitaries" and the church rulers limited the sovereign from absolute power. Third, the Serb dignitaries were similar in structure to western feudal lords and occasionally met in a form of parliament to provide a check or balance to the king. The hereditary ownership of large lands, worked by the majority of the Serb population in the form of serfs or peasants, greatly enhanced their power. The lands of the church and the products from them can be assessed as having a similar strengthening power. Finally, and perhaps most importantly for this examination, was the structure of military force. There appears to have been two distinct portions of the military forces available in Serbia:

A part of it was made up of the great lords, who brought into the field with them the required contingent of their followers, but, in addition to this feudal body, the tsar commanded a mercenary army, composed of foreigners and brought to as many companies as his fluctuating means permitted. On these mercenaries, who

constituted a heavy cavalry and who were excellently trained, fell the brunt of the fighting.³

In hindsight two other factors seem to be critical prior to describing the Serbian Kingdom. First, in the Balkans, no national ethnic unity existed between the Hellenic people and the Slavs and Bulgars to the north. It is worth noting that Orthodoxy was firmly established in both the north and the south but religion was only one of the three unifying factors of religion, ethnicity, and nationality. This left force as the primary unifying factor throughout the peninsula. Second, the majority of the population in Serbia proper was not nomadic, but they lived in small towns or smaller villages. Unlike Greece or Byzantium, there was no large city that could be captured and, thus, result in instant control of the kingdom.

Chronologically, two occurrences happened almost simultaneously. King Stephen Dushan died, possibly of Greek poison, and was succeeded by his weak son in 1346. Unfortunately this was the year after the Ottoman Turks began their conquest of the southern Balkans. Following the death of King Dushan, his son was unable to maintain his grip on the entire peninsula. Simultaneous disintegration into smaller, sovereign states and the arrival of the very integrated Turks allowed systematic assimilation over the next 100 years.

The Ottomans took advantage of the internal state weakness of the decaying Byzantines and defeat an aging Empire. The large Ottoman state could then defeat the smaller fractious and divided states in the Balkan Peninsula. This was possible because the Kingdom of Serbia did not remain large and powerful in the wake of an inopportune death of the Tsar of Serbs and Greeks. With Dushan's death, his weaker progeny could no longer provide even half of the forces as the Great Lords took their forces to reclaim

their former positions as leaders in their own right. In the next section, it will be obvious that a large, centrally organized state will be at a competitive advantage over a small state or a weakly controlled state with less unifying characteristics.

The Ottoman Conquest: 1300-1600

Determining the truth of the origins of the Ottoman Empire is impossible. Most Turkish/Ottoman history is from sources recording near-mythical events. Almost every modern history of the Ottoman era states something to this effect in early portion of the work. As Finkel says in her recent *Osman's Dream*, "By the time the story of the beginnings of the Ottoman Empire came to be written down, they were a distant memory."⁴ But, the unavailability of primary source information forces acceptance of these later histories as, at least, semi-factual.

The Osmanli: Early History

While Muslim forces invaded and conquered portions of Europe and Africa in the 6th and 7th Centuries, it was not the beginning of the Turkish Empire that took the name of its first leader. It is widely agreed in most histories that the Turkomen tribes migrated westward under land pressure from Mongolian nomadic hordes. Because the Arabic Seljuk kingdom that ruled what is now Iraq and Iran had solid control of the Mesopotamian river valleys and the Persian plateau, the Turkomen were forced to continue their migration westward into the Anatolian peninsula of Asia Minor.

Following this official mythology, a man named Osman lived on land granted to his father following intervention in a battle against Mongol forces allowing beleaguered Seljuk forces to triumph. The land, on the northwest fringe of Seljuk lands at Sugut, was

only about 100 miles from Constantinople. The power of the Seljuks was waning, however. When Genghis Kahn routed the Seljuk forces in 1243, the region devolved into disorder.

In 1299, Osman declared independence from the weakened Seljuk leadership, providing a point that can be considered the beginning of the Ottoman nation. Osman's actions following this declaration seemed to be solely oriented on raiding relatively rich frontier lands of Byzantium. During this raiding, he invited other fighters to join him and, due to their continued success, began to develop a large military force. While details are sorely lacking, this force progressed into a structured military organization that was able to conquer the remnants of the decaying Seljuk nation and rule the "Osmanli" under a single leader. In the thirty years before his death, Osman and his warriors came to rule much of Asia Minor. The whole country was not ethnically homogenous, but the Osmanli were able to expand to the north and the west. Cahen asserts "On the one hand, it is certain that the majority of the population was not Turkish, it was not even Muslim, and it was not unified."⁵ More important was their ability to deploy forces capable of dominating their neighbors.

Several facts are known about the progress of taking over the Asian peninsula. The first recorded battle between Osman and a serious Byzantine force was in 1301 where the Byzantines were routed. Presumably, this should have been the warning to the Byzantine Emperors that their southern/eastern flank was in danger. Unfortunately for the Byzantines, this was also the period when Tsar Dushan was completing the conquest of the Balkan Peninsula. For Osman, more importantly, "It brought fame to him, as holy warriors from all parts of Anatolia flocked more than ever to his standard."⁶ Osman did

not then turn and attempt to capture the three major Byzantine cities in Asia Minor. Rather, he and his men settled in the area for years prior to the eventual attack on Bursa where the seven year siege led to the surrender of the garrisons. With his death in 1326, his sons took assumed the two roles of Sultan and Vizier (advisor) continuing his efforts. Following the success of this Osman in beginning the nation-state, his son Orkhan continued this process bringing down Nicaea and Nicomedia, in 1329 and 1338 respectively, and continued to invest the whole northwestern area of Asia Minor. Following this success in Asia Minor, the move into the Balkans was no invasion. Due to the Byzantine dynastic struggles, the Osamanli first entered Europe at the invitation of a usurper to the Byzantine throne. Successful in their attempt to take the throne, Orkhan then married the daughter of the Byzantine Emperor. Tsar Dushan of Serbia also attempted to gain a military alliance with Orkhan in this same manner, most likely in the late 1340s. When that failed, Dushan launched his endeavor to capture Constantinople on his own in 1355, where he died en route. Before that, however, the Turkoman troops served against the Serbs in 1350, against the Venetians at the behest of the Genoese in 1352, and, most importantly, to save the Byzantine usurper's throne in 1353. In order to secure Ottoman troops for self preservation, the Emperor promised Orkhan a fortress near Gallipoli. When Orkhan's son, Suleiman Pasha, arrived to take possession of the fortress, an earthquake broke the walls surrounding the town of Gallipoli. Histories disagree on the exact order of what happened in the succeeding months, but all of them agree that the Ottomans never left again. By Orkhan's death in 1359, the Byzantine Emperor was, in all but name, a vassal to the Sultan and the "Empire" consisted of little more than Constantinople itself.

Orkhan's second son Murad I carried out the actual conquest of the Balkans. Immediately upon assuming the mantle of leadership, the Ottomans had begun taking land on the Peninsula. By late 1360, they controlled the rest of Thrace and had massacred the garrison at Chorlu. Adrianople surrendered without fighting and officially became the capital of the Ottoman Empire. In 1363, a Hungarian and Serbian force was slaughtered after an unopposed crossing of the Maritza River. In 1366, the Byzantine Emperor promised to submit the Orthodox populace to Roman Catholic religious supremacy and, thus arranged armed intervention in an attempt to prevent total Ottoman conquest. Despite losing Gallipoli, the Ottomans were not driven out. And, when the Emperor tried again to gain European support, the populace of Constantinople would not allow it. Apparently, conquest by a Muslim who supported freedom of religion, for those who could afford it, was preferable to submission to Rome. Thus, within ten years, the Byzantine "Emperor" was formally a vassal and compelled to provide troops for service in the Sultan's armies in Asia.

By 1366, though, the Ottomans had invaded Bulgaria. After initially colluding with the Turks and swearing fealty, one of the Bulgarian princes attempted to drive the Ottomans out. Despite assistance from Serbian forces, he was defeated and destroyed at Samakov in 1371. The Ottomans then turned, invaded and conquered the eastern region of mountainous Macedonia. By 1372, they had crossed the Vardar River and Prince Lazar, sad successor to Tsar Dushan's progeny, became the vassal of the Sultan. After a pause of several years to pursue expansion in Asia, Murad returned to conquering in the Balkans in 1380. That year the Ottomans secured Monastir, and thus security from forces in what is now Albania. In 1385, they took Sofia, the logistical route up the Danube. And,

by the end of 1386, the Serbian capital of Nish had been conquered. Again, though, efforts and troops were required in Asia and the Sultan's armies turned east, along with Serbian and Byzantine levies. Because of rules against looting Muslims, very unhappy Serbian troops returned to Serbia. While Murad I was engaged in Asia, the Serbians united with the Prince of Bosnia to throw out the Turks. After a victory at Plochnik over the Ottoman Army invading Bosnia, Prince Lazar was able to form a large, unified army in late 1387.

When Murad returned to Europe, however, he attacked and completed conquering Bulgaria first. Thus bolstered with Bulgarian levies to fight the "Grand Pan-Serbian Alliance" of his rebellious vassal Prince Lazar, Murad I defeated the combined forces at Kosovo Polje. Murad, himself, died, though. Lazar's son-in-law, pretending to defect, gained audience with the Sultan where he stabbed him. While not killing him instantly, the wound was fatal. In return, Sultan Bayezid I succeeded his father and had much of the Serbian nobility massacred. The new Tsar Stephen again pledged fealty and Serbia returned to its previous semi-autonomous vassal status. With Serbian troops securing the Ottoman northern border against the Hungarians, Bayezid was able to return to Asia to continue expansion there.

In 1391 the Byzantine Emperor died. After Manuel II took the Byzantine throne, the Ottomans laid siege to the city until a much increased tribute was exacted. Yet, Manuel II continued to rule, despite slowly giving away more and more freedom to the Sultan. Five years later, in 1396, the last of the crusades began. King Sigismund of Hungary gathered over 100,000 men at Buda to attempt to drive the "infidels" out of Europe. Moving almost without opposition, they captured Nish, moved through Serbia

and down the Danube river valley until they reached Nicopolis. There, the amateur forces of Europe were decisively routed. Bayezid killed all prisoners (except a few of the very rich nobility) and that was the end of that attempt to drive the Turks out of Europe.

This victory might have set the stage for further conquest in Europe, but the eastern Ottoman armies had run into Timur and his Tartars. During the expansion hiatus Timur caused, he destroyed the Ottomans, the Seljuks and their allies, with a well-trained, well-led force in 1401. Timur captured Bayezid I at Angora and, within two years, had overrun Asia Minor and made a vassal state of the Ottoman Empire. But, because he desired to conquer China, he left in 1403 and Bayezid's sons fell into civil war. Ten years later, though, Sultan Mehmed I was crowned and the Ottoman Empire returned to conquering. Mehmed's son, Murad II, spent his reign capturing the last of the Anatolian provinces, reestablishing control of the rest of Serbia, defeating coup attempts, and pushing back another pair of incursions by the leader of Hungary.

Mehmed II, then, was the Sultan who finally sacked Constantinople on 29 May 1453. Following Constantinople, Belgrade fell in 1456. He then turned his attention to Greece. His forces moved into Greece in 1458 and, after redeploying forces again in 1460, he established near total control of the Hellene Peninsula. Mehmed sought total control of the Balkan Peninsula and began to "round off the corners" at the extreme edges. In 1461, he defeated Vlad Dracul and drove him out of Moldavia. In 1463, Mehmed moved into Bosnia where he conquered and slaughtered the ruling nobility. After years of failure, he finally succeeded in conquering most of Albania by 1467, though the mountain fortresses of Croia and Scutarri held out until 1470. The conquest was complete in 1479 when Venice came to peace terms with the Sultan, agreeing to pay

tribute for their freedom. Mehmed II, now known as Mehmed the Conqueror, went on to attack Italy and Venice as well. His heirs would go on to conquer more lands in both Asia and Africa, but for the purposes of this profile, the conquest of the Balkans was complete by the beginning of the Sixteenth century. Until the 1878 Treaty of Berlin, only the Ottomans would rule in the Balkans.

Background Analysis

The purpose of examining history so far in the past is, perhaps, not immediately obvious. But, there are a series of key observations to draw prior to examining the more recent history of the 19th and 20th Centuries. The first point to note must be the intersection of multiple cultures that occurs throughout history in this region.

Because of the geographical location, the Balkan peninsula is a natural chokepoint for movement of people, goods, cultures and religions. Due to lack of extensive archeological examination north of the Greek city-states of antiquity, the history of region is relatively unknown prior to recorded history. But, there is no question that the region was settled repeatedly by different tribes as they came under pressure from the north and/or the south. And, because these tribes were not powerful enough to resist the pressure, the tribes were relatively weak upon arrival. This means that the area is one of the most ethnically diverse regions in the world. In other, equally diverse regions, one or more of the ethnic groups gained dominance and either dominated their neighbors or drove them out. Many of them fled to the Balkan Peninsula throughout the 1st Millennium A.D. In this ethnically diverse area, there was no one tribe sufficiently powerful for a long enough period to change the ethnic identity of the people living under their rule. Thus, the Serbian, Bosnian and Greek tribes continued to consider themselves

a separate ethnicity from the Bulgarians, despite multiple generations of intermarriage and coexistence. Similarly, when the Ottomans came to dominate the peninsula, an additional religious factor was interjected. While the people of the peninsula were familiar with inter-Christian infighting, the introduction of Islam made the conflict even more complex. While it is outside the scope of this paper to cover the issue extensively, the Bogomil “heresy” of the Bosnian tribes vied against both the Bulgarian/Greek Orthodox beliefs of the Serbians and the Roman Catholic beliefs held by the Slovenes, Venetians and Austrians until the arrival of the Ottoman conquerors. Some Bosnian authors contend that the Bogomil belief that Jesus was a man born of woman who was later honored by God to save the chosen aligned more closely with Islamic teachings⁷. Additionally, as the Bogomils had already been excommunicated by the Roman Catholic Church by the end of the Fourth century, they had no loyalties to the Christian organized religions in any case. The importance of religion in the area could be overstated, but it was important enough that many southern Bulgarians, and the majority of the Bosnian tribes, were branded heretics. This resulted in a more ready acceptance of Islam by the Bosnians than by the other tribes in the region. Thus, despite nearly identical appearances and early cultural histories, these divides of religion and ethnicity are very real in the mind of the people. The minds of these people were shaped by these times of rule under other ethnicities and, even more so, shaped by how these times of rule occurred.

The second, and more important, observation is that a modern military leader must realize that the history of the people in this region are full of conflict. In such a quick summation of 500 years of conflict, it is not possible to include references, much less details on each of the battles or campaigns. But, even with such a short review, a

reader can understand that the reality of the people in the region includes constant warfare. With few exceptions, almost every portion of the peninsula has undergone warfare every few generations. This means that virtually all people have personal knowledge of times of conflict. If a man or woman did not personally fight or have friends who did, he or she almost certainly had either grandparents or grandchildren who did. Because of this, every person in the region feels that they “know” what really happened in a conflict in any particular area. Additionally, because they are taught of previous conflicts, by parents, grandparents or schools, they “know” that this type of conflict has been going on for hundreds of years. This “knowledge” forms the basis from which they make decisions, despite the difference that their reality has from the myths, legends or oral history that form their neighbor’s “reality.” These differences in reality are the second major point to understand.

In each region, the personal interaction with history causes significant coloring of perspective. As a reader can see, the Bulgarians believe they have a claim to modern-day Serbia, Macedonia, Croatia, and portions of Albania, Greece and Turkey. If a A.D. 1050 map were to be used to draw modern-day boundaries, the peninsula would probably be called the Bulgarian Peninsula. Likewise the Serbians have claims over much of the same area, including all of modern-day Bulgaria, if one were using a map dated 1350. And, a Turkish claim for everything south of the Danube is perfectly logical using a map dated 1700. Because of Great Power intervention and militarily enforced treaties in the Twentieth century, it would seem that the fights over land would be outdated. But, modern-day events have shown that the passage of time is no solution for overcoming the beliefs of the people living in the area.

¹Paul Stephenson, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier: A Political Study of the Northern Balkans, 900-1204* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 307.

²Ferdinand Schevill, *The History of the Balkan Peninsula: From the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1922), 153.

³Shevill, *The History of the Balkan Peninsula*, 157.

⁴Caroline Finkel, *Osman's Dream: The Story of the Ottoman Empire 1300-1923*. (New York: Basic Books, 2005), p.11.

⁵Claude Cahen, *The Formation of Turkey: The Seljukid Sultanate of Rum: Eleventh to Fourteenth century*. (London: Longman Pub Group, 2001), 143.

⁶Lord Kinross, *The Ottoman Centuries; The Rise and Fall of the Turkish Empire*. New York: William and Morrow, Co.), 1979.

⁷Mehmed Handzic al-Bosnawi, "The Primary Cause of the Bogumils' Conversion to Islam;" available from <http://www.islaam.com/Article.aspx?id=658>; accessed 30 May 2007.

CHAPTER 3

BALKAN NATIONALISM AND WORLD WAR I

During the 1800s, the desire to become nations took root, again, within the peoples of the Balkan Peninsula. Following the success of Italy in throwing off external rule, the Bosnians, the Serbs, the Croatians, the Greeks and the Bulgarians all began the process of making their ethnic groups into nationalities. Arguably, this process is still on going in the early Twenty-first century; the most recent diplomatic maneuvering is amazingly similar to the actions of the ethnic leaders prior to the First World War. This chapter will examine the background, the conflicts and the diplomacy that surrounded the tension in the Balkans and what led to the subsequent initiation of the First World War from the perspective of the Balkan states.

Crisis Based Fragmentation

The beginning of nationhood came during the Balkan crisis and the Treaty of Berlin of 1878. In the early 1800s, the Serbian people expressed a strong desire to return to standing as a nation of their own. Following a series of partially successful revolutionary movements, both the Serbs and the Greeks became autonomous regions within the Ottoman Empire following the Turk-Russian agreement at the Peace of Adrianople in 1829. Without dwelling on the period before 1860, the important factor to know in the diplomatic landscape of Serbia was the establishment of a Serbian government with a Slavic ruling leader and the displacement of the Muslim Turk landowners out of the region of Serbia. While similar developments occurred in Greece, the details are less important in this discussion. Both of these regions were in favor of

throwing off the rule of the Turks entirely and Greece began another revolution on the Isle of Crete in 1866. However, the failure of the Greeks and the Serbs to unite allowed the Turks to defeat the rebellion in only seven weeks. Five years later, in 1871, Bosnia and Herzegovina initiated a revolution of their own. To determine why this revolution spread so rapidly, as opposed to the previous attempts, one must find the origin of the Pan-Slavic movement in the Balkans. This is primarily because the leaders of Bosnia-Herzegovina, at the time, were the former ethnic Slavs: Serbian nobility that converted to Islam during the initial influx of the Ottoman Empire.

The Pan-Slavic movement was formalized in Russia in the late 1850s in the form of several non-government organizations. The basic theory of Pan-Slavism argued that Slavs were not a decadent culture like Western Europe and that Slavs were the leaders of developed culture. The Russian diplomat, Count Nicolas Ignatiev, was a strong proponent of this theory. As the Russian ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, he held an extremely powerful position in the Ottoman Empire while advancing the Pan-Slavic movement. Russia's official foreign policy felt this situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina was important to the needs of Russia. Ignatiev's actions indicate that he believed that the Austro-Hungarian Empire was the greatest enemy of Russia during this period. His views were strong enough that he encouraged the Bosnian revolt in order to deprive the Austro-Hungarian Empire of the much-desired perception that the Austro-Hungarian Empire could also claim to be a Slavic state. The Austro-Hungarian Empire desired the Bosnia-Herzegovina region in order to protect its land mass of Dalmatia which was the main Hapsburg coastal region in the Adriatic. Without the Pan-Slavic movement, the revolution in Bosnia would have remained an internal affair of the Ottoman Empire.

However, with this movement, it was enough to involve almost every person in Bosnia Herzegovina. Once this revolution began, the leaders in Russia and in Austria sought to sustain the war for their own purposes.

Diplomats from Germany, Italy and France came together to attempt multi-lateral mediation during 1875, but the British government objected to the collective decisions, which killed the attempt. By mid-May 1876, Bulgaria had joined Bosnia in revolt, which the Ottomans suppressed with barbarous brutality. Meanwhile, the government in Serbia accurately assessed that Russia would eventually go to war against Turkey. Thus, Serbia declared war against Turkey in June, 1876, and Montenegro followed suit soon after. At this point all of the Balkan Peninsula north of Albania was at war against Turkey. In the second half of 1876, the brutality of the suppression in Bulgaria caused a change in British public opinion of how London ought to react. During this period, the Turkish military was defeating the rebellious regions of their territory of Serbia. Simultaneously, the Pan-Slavic movement in Russia caused popular unrest sufficient to cause the tsar to issue a 48-hour ultimatum that led to the armistice of October 1876.

During this armistice, the major powers met in Constantinople for a “during-crisis” attempt at diplomatic resolution. According to historian L.S. Starivanous, the main provisions of the armistice agreement were:

Bulgaria should be divided into an eastern and western province, Bosnia Herzegovina united into one province and each of the three provinces to have a considerable degree of autonomy including a provincial assembly and a local police force. Also Serbia was to lose no territory and Montenegro was to be allowed to keep the areas she had overrun in Herzegovina and northern Albania.¹

The Turks rejected this agreement and asserted that Ottoman territory was inalienable.

Following the failure of the Constantinople Conference, Russia entered into an agreement

with Austria that enabled Russia to go to war with Turkey. When the Russians eventually fought their way down to Constantinople, the war ended with the Treaty of San Stefano. This treaty provided for a number of notable changes in the structure of the Balkan Peninsula. Bosnia-Herzegovina was granted the autonomy promised in the Constantinople Accord, Serbia and Montenegro were enlarged and made independent, Romania was to have full independence and Bulgaria was re-created as an independent principality. The size of this Bulgaria is noteworthy however, as it was quite large. It included most of the land south of the Danube that was west of the Black Sea, and violated provisions of the Budapest Treaty against a large Balkan nation. With major opposition by Austria, Greece and Serbia, the large gathering of diplomats in Berlin, later known as the Treaty of Berlin, modified the Treaty of San Stefano.

This meeting of diplomats did include representatives of the Balkan States and Turkey, but both were ignored in the end. This occurred despite the agreements of 1856 when the Congress of Paris guaranteed the sultan his territory. The end-state resulted in an agreement similar to the San Stefano treaty in that it created Serbia and Montenegro as independent states, though smaller. The Treaty of Berlin also took Bosnia-Herzegovina from the Ottomans for Austria to rule, but not to annex. The treaty also allowed Austria to garrison Novi Bazar to prevent the Yugoslav state that the Austrians feared could attract the Slavs currently under Austrian rule. Bulgaria, however, was much reduced in size and returned to the traditional area north of the Balkan Mountains.

The treaty was received with mixed reviews depending on one's viewpoint. For the Russians, this treaty was a disappointment. It was not a bad thing that they gained land, as they wanted to push their territorial limits down into Asia Minor. However, they

were unable to create a large Slavic state as they desired, they were unable to totally disassemble European Turkey, and they were particularly upset that their *Dreikaiserbund* (the Three Emperors League) allies did not support their claims based on the previous treaty. The British were pleased because they were allowed to occupy Cyprus as a deterrent to further Russian aggression and, perhaps more importantly, they rejoiced at the breakup of the German-Austrian-Hungarian-Russian alliance. The Austrians were pleased because they were both able to gain control of the Bosnia-Herzegovina region and mount a strategic garrison to prevent a Yugoslavia from developing.

In the Balkan region, the treaty itself was not well received at all. There was no consideration in the treaty for the nationalistic desires or ethnic composition of the region's people. The Romanians were unhappy at the loss of land to Russia. The Serbs were unhappy that the Austrians prevented consolidation of Bosnia under Serbian leadership. The Greeks were unhappy that they gained no land in Macedonia. Macedonians were unhappy because they were completely ruled by the Turks. There was dissatisfaction on the part of the Bulgarians that they did not develop into a large Slavic nation. The Western European powers saw the treaty as a good solution. It was a total failure for the aspirations of the people of the Balkan Peninsula and solved none of the problems from their perspective.

The Tempest in the Teapot

The Russian losses at the diplomatic table had significant impacts on their abilities to influence the actions and reactions of the Turks following the Treaty. Concurrently, the Germans took great pains to develop the relationship they had with the Turks. While this became important to German military needs later, during World War I,

the largest impact to the Balkans was the further alignment of the Balkan Slavs with the Russian foreign policy. However, this was only possible once the intra-Balkan warfare subsided at the end of the century.

Despite the effort Russia expended to force the creation of Bulgaria, the years leading up to World War I were a period in which Bulgaria was quite determined to remain independent of its benefactors. The major focus of the Bulgarian government was continuing its efforts to free the rest of the Peninsula from Turkish rule. The secondary focus, within Bulgarian politics, revolved around seizing, controlling and consolidating domestic political power. But, by focusing strongly on the external threats, they succeeded in gaining control of their eastern border with the incorporation of East Rumelia in 1885. This success had the effect of causing the abdication of their Prince Alexander. They were less successful in incorporating Macedonia. With their move towards Macedonia, they ran afoul of Greece and Serbia as well as the Turks and several other European powers. Following the successes of Bulgaria, Serbia mobilized its army in order to seize more land of its own. Perhaps seeing an attack on Turkey as foolish, the Serbs attacked Bulgaria on 14 November 1885. Much to the surprise of European watchers, the Bulgarians defeated the Serb army. Only the ultimatum for cessation of hostilities from the Austrians forced the Bulgarians to accept a peace at *status quo ante bellum*. Less than 10 years after being freed from the hated, but overpowering, rule of the Turks, the two ancient enemies were again at war.

The intervention of the Austrians on the side of the Serbs highlights the fact that the alignment of the Balkans with Russia was not initially apparent during this period in Serbia. During nearly the whole of the Nineteenth century, Russia had been attempting to

create a Slavic nation out of the northern Ottoman Empire. This was, in no small part, a plan that seems to be oriented on creating a buffer zone between Austria and the Straits of Bosphorus. The failure of the Russians to fully succeed is discussed at some length, by several authors. But, the disruption in close association between Serbia and Russia is a topic of more interest when examining internal Balkan Politics.

With the establishment of a principality in Serbia in 1829, the Obrenovich dynasty began their rule. Prince Milan was the ruler in power when Serbia was finally became independent. His personal commitment to positive relations with Austria resulted in his acceptance of diplomatic relations that were the equivalent of vassalage for Serbia. He was also forced to sign a trade agreement that allowed Austrian merchants to use Serbia as their private goods market. This produced significant stress with the Russophiles in his government and caused him to have very low popular support. He attempted to bring dignity to Serbia by declaring himself king, but with a murderous peasant insurrection and majority election of the Russian leaning Radical Party to the Skupshtina, he was in dire straits with domestic politics. His failure to win additional territory from Bulgaria, and his subsequent rescue by the Austrians, forced him to abdicate in favor of his son, Alexander. Alexander's rule from March, 1889, until his murder in June of 1903 is generally described as execrable and damaged relations with both Austria and Russia.

He was replaced by Peter Karageorgevich who made constitutional rule with a liberal tradition a reality. The other major characteristic of this time was that it was nationalistic and resisted economic domination by Austria. In 1906, when the trade agreement with Austria broke down, Peter established a major trade agreement with

Bulgaria with plans to create a custom-free zone by 1917. With the worsening of trade relations and the diplomatic need to keep the Serbians within the Austrian sphere of influence, the Austrians started the “Pig War” and refused to allow agricultural products into the country. The result was quite negative for Austria. Serbia purchased military materiel from France and developed a number of other markets for Serbian goods. This Serbian success had the result of Serbia pulling away from Austria while appearing to gain the greatest significant diplomatic prestige since the days of the earlier dynasty. With this weakening of relations with Austria came a reciprocal strengthening interest in consolidation of Bosnia-Herzegovina with Serbia.

In 1908, the Ottoman-Turk Empire was overthrown by a group of military leaders, commonly called the “Young Turks”. The Turks, therefore, initiated a number of actions that led to their future disintegration in European Turkey. The first major effect was the expulsion of “unreliable” military leaders that stripped the army of experienced soldiers. This was followed by the move to a Turko-centric constitution demanding that all disparate ethnicities think of themselves of Turkish. In reality, it had the effect of driving non-Turks away from loyalty. During this period of weakness, Austria annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina in its entirety. Initially, the Russian foreign minister concurred with the move of their recently re-established *Dreikaiserbund* partner in exchange for support for Russian warship access to the Straits of Bosphorus. However, the Pan-Slavic feeling of the Russian people caused a huge backlash in public opinion of the Russian people. Additionally, Serbia objected in the most strident diplomatic manor, calling this the “Alsace-Lorraine of the Balkans”. This, when added to the lack of Austrian support for Russian ship movements, caused Russia, on behalf of the Turks, to object to the

annexation. When no support from the British and French materialized for armed resistance over the Balkans, Russia desisted and Serbia was unable to support going to armed conflict against a prepared Austro-Hungarian Empire. This event ruined Austrian diplomatic relations with both Russia and Serbia in 1908 and led, fairly directly, to the establishment of the Balkan League.

The Pot Boils Over: The First Balkan War

The Balkan League was an attempt by the Balkan nations, at the urging of Russia, to establish diplomatic relationship between Bulgaria, Greece, Montenegro and Serbia. Key to this relationship was the agreements established to determine the disposition of Macedonia, despite the current ownership by Turkey. Macedonia can accurately be described as the hot spot with the Balkans as the Balkans were the hot spot of Europe during this period. The region was made up of the Kosovo region, the city and surroundings of Saloniki and the Monastir area. It included the major battlefield of the Ottoman conquest (Kosovo) the major southern port (Saloniki) and two of the major fertile river valleys in the southern portion of the peninsula. It was bordered by Bulgaria, Greece and Serbia and consisted of people who considered themselves to be either Bulgarian, Greek, or Serbian depending on which border was closest. While they were religiously similar, the people spoke different languages thus were not known to intermarry and no “melting pot” phenomenon is reported to have existed. All three countries claimed prominence due to a previous domination of the region at different times in the past. With the confluence of an independence attempt in Albania and an armed conflict between the Turks and the Italians in 1911, the three countries came to agreements. In March 1912, the Bulgarians and Serbians agreed to a border dividing

Macedonia and left a portion to be arbitrated by Russia at a later date. The Greek-Bulgarian agreements were reportedly verbal and nothing written seems to have ever been published, which left a number of issues for later contention.

Bulgaria's October 1912 attack south into Ottoman territory was initially successful while Turkey was fighting Italy and Greece prevented movement of Turkish reinforcements from Asia. Bulgaria contributed the largest, best-armed land force to the fight while Greece's navy dominated the coast and straits. Agreeing to Italy's demand for island ownership as quickly as possible, Turkey turned its attentions to fighting the Bulgarians as their top priority. Despite this, the Bulgarians were able to seize all of the Ottoman territory north of the Chatalja line that defended Constantinople.

Notwithstanding Great Power demands to stop, the Bulgars assaulted the Chatalja line and were soundly defeated. By the end of the year, however, only Constantinople and Adrianople were still held by the Ottomans in the newly Bulgarian region. Unfortunately for them, the success of the Bulgars sent their armies south while Greece and Serbia seized and divided almost all of Macedonia between them. After seizing Macedonia, some of the Serbian forces, second only to Bulgaria in size and arms, moved south to assist in the siege of Adrianople and coalition operations commenced. While Greece occupied the port of Saloniki and numerous Aegean islands, Montenegro and Serbian forces took the former Austrian region of Novi Bazar to prevent Austria from being able to separate the two countries during the fighting. Then, the joint forces moved into Albania, conquering all but Scutari, which they put under a siege that lasted through the armistice of December 1912.

This armistice led to the London Peace Conference where the Great Powers attempted to make all of the “real decisions” with Italy, Russia and Austria in conflict over spheres of influence in the region and the Turks pushed aside. Four major issues had to be resolved in order to stop the First Balkan War. First, Austria and Italy desired an independent Albania as a counter-weight to Greek and Serbian dominance on the Adriatic coast. Second, Serbia’s troops had fought hard to take the middle of modern-day Albania and they were unwilling to leave the coast while Serbian and Montenegrin forces still held Scutari. Serbian forces finally had coastal access along the Adriatic and they were loath to relinquish it. Third, both the Greeks and the Turks demanded ownership of islands in the Aegean Sea. Fourth, the Russians and the combatants wanted to determine the borders in Thrace once and for all. However, neither the Greeks nor the Bulgarians were willing to discuss leaving Saloniki, the Turks were unwilling to discuss losing their islands, and the Serbs were unwilling to pull out of portions of Macedonia they had already occupied. Additionally, Romania was demanding Bulgarian territory following Bulgarians gains at Turkish expense in compensation for their neutrality during the fighting. But, Russia did not have the political will to make a decision and make it stand between their two supplicant states. These problems were unresolved and fighting began again six weeks later.

The Turks had used the time to move and resupply forces for a counter-attack. They did this immediately in an attempt to relieve the besieged Adrianople, but failed and it fell in March 1913. Greece also succeeded in its siege of Janinia (*also Yaninia*) and then moved their forces south to reinforce their claim on Saloniki. Ignoring Italian and Austrian instructions and their naval blockage, Serbia and Montenegro forces finally

starved the town of Scuttari into submission on 23 April 1913. Austria immediately issued an ultimatum demanding the Montenegrins depart. Unable to defeat the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Montenegrin forces left the town two weeks later to international peacekeeping forces arriving by sea. On 30 May 1913, the Turks signed a peace treaty with the Balkan League giving up claims to all land north of an imaginary line just north of Constantinople. The Great Powers were left to decide what was to be done with Albania and the Aegean islands still under contention.

The Second Balkan War

With Turkey driven south, arguments began immediately within the League. Russian arbitration between Romania and Bulgaria resulted in the award of a Bulgarian town to Romania. The fact that anything was given to Romania infuriated the Bulgarians while the Romanians were disappointed that their demand for much more was unfulfilled. Meanwhile, Serbia refused to submit their claim on Macedonia to arbitration by the Russians. The weak willed Russians were unwilling to force Serbia out of western Macedonia, leaving Bulgaria without support. The Greeks and Serbs made a pact on 1 June, one day after the end of the First Balkan War, to mutually defend what they had claimed against Bulgarian demands. Political realities in Bulgaria demanded that, despite bearing the brunt of the fighting against Turkey, they could either use their massive, trained army or disband it. Two days later, the Bulgars attacked the Greeks and Serbs simultaneously in defiance of the powerless Russians and to the delight of the Austrians and Italians. Raging in diplomatic circles against this aggression, the Greeks and Serbs, with their ally Montenegro, recovered within the week and held most of their ground. On 10 July 1913, the Romanians attacked the distracted Bulgarians to seize the land they had

previously sought during arbitration. On 12 July 1913, Turkey also attacked Bulgaria, retaking almost everything that Bulgaria had just won in the First Balkan War.

Bulgaria was unable to resist a simultaneous attack from all sides and her government fell. The pro-Russia government was replaced by an anti-Russia government and they sought a diplomatic solution to the war. At the Treaty of Bucharest, signed on 10 August 1913, Bulgaria was the big loser. The Romanians gained a large portion of northern Bulgaria. Greece received the southern Macedonian coastline and Saloniki. The Montenegro borders grew until they touched Serbia south of Bosnia-Herzegovina. And, the Serbs retained most of Macedonia including Kosovo and the Monastir regions. While the Serbs did not want to give any of Macedonia up, the Russians and Austrians applied heavy pressure and the Bulgars took possession of a single town and its surroundings.

The Bulgarians clearly made some errors in judgment prior to antagonizing all of their allies. One of them was, obviously, executing a surprise attack without gaining the open support of any major European power. When Russia did not step into the fray to assist the surrounded Bulgaria, an irreconcilable split developed. This left Russia with only Serbia as a major client state on the Balkan Peninsula, ensuring Russia would be forced to stand firm behind any action of Serbia or against her in the near future.

The Great War in the Balkans

The Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913 created five countries. They were Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro, Greece, and finally Albania. By the start of World War I, the “Young Turks” had overthrown the last Ottoman ruler and controlled Istanbul and Adrianople. At the same time, the northern portions were controlled by the Austrian Hapsburg Empire. Thus, there were three major religions, numerous legal systems,

several languages, and multiple cultures built from these varied histories. The genesis of each of these new countries from the ashes of the Ottoman's European empire came through violence. However, external diplomatic pressure and occasionally external force were applied by the European Great Powers to initiate and create these fledgling nations as they emerged or re-emerged as states in their own right. These inherent differences had created sufficient animosity between the nations to cause the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913 and simultaneously caused the alignment of these various states with various Great Powers.

Greece was generally aligned with Great Britain who was the primary sponsor of the treaty freeing the Greek state from Ottoman rule. The Albanian nation also looked to the British for guidance, due to British support for the creation of the Albanian nation designed to prevent an Adriatic outlet to the Serbians. Russia had been the primary power behind the freeing of the Slavic Serbs and Bulgars from the Ottomans, but with the failure of Russia to come into the Balkan War of 1913 on the side of the Bulgarians, the Bulgarians split from the Russian camp. The Bulgarians, due to the antipathy towards the Serbians, supported the Austrian annexation of Bosnia during the Young Turk revolt and they were generally considered to be aligned with the Austrians. While the British supported Serbian independence in the 1800s, the Serbians did not particularly like the British due to their support of Albania. The continual support by the Russians, though, against the Ottomans and the Austrians, led to unequivocal support for Russian policy. Montenegro, created in the last half of the Nineteenth century, aligned itself with Serbia, its larger and religiously and culturally similar neighbor. Thus, at the start of World War I, the British, Russian, French and Italian Allies joined Serbia who defied Austria-

Hungarian demands to turn over the leaders of the Black Hand terrorist group that Austria claimed assassinated Austria's Grand Duke, despite the claim of responsibility by a group calling themselves "The Young Bosnians". Greece, Montenegro and Albania likewise supported the Allied cause in The Great War. Most Bosnians remained loyal to Austria-Hungary, but some individuals fought in the Serbian Army. Conversely, Turkey joined Austria-Hungary and Germany in the creation of the Central Powers who were joined by Bulgaria in attacking Serbia at the beginning of the war.

On 12 August 1914, the Austro-Hungarians invaded Serbia. Thanks to Russian involvement, only their Fifth and Sixth Armies went south, but they were better equipped and outnumbered the Serbians. The Austrian seizure of Sabac was the first allied victory of the war, but Serbia successfully reclaimed it within a week. However, with Bulgaria's entry into the war, the Serbian army was soon cut off from military and materiel supplies from the Allies via Greece. By the time the successful Austro-Hungarian-Bulgarian joint operation commenced on 7 October 1915, the Serbian military and populace had also been ravaged by typhus. Military observers were not surprised that the Serbian Army was defeated and was forced to withdraw to Greece. By December 1915, "Only a few miserable remnants escaped into the Albanian mountains, losing the whole of their artillery and everything else that they could not carry. There was no longer a Serbian Army."² The escaping soldiers of the Serbian Army who made it to Greece joined the Greek Army. They formed into a single division called the Yugoslav Division of Serbs, Croats, Macedonians, Montenegrins and Slovenes, a foreshadowing of the unification attempt following World War I. Serbia suffered 125,000 military casualties with 650,000 civilians dead; 65 percent of the military casualties are attributed to non-battle injuries³.

Failed Diplomacy and Dissolution

In the years after the Treaty of Berlin of 1878, but before the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913, there were four major conflicts on the Balkan Peninsula. First was the 1885 Serb-Bulgar war for territory. The first war, not addressed extensively in this paper focusing on the 1900s, was the Greek-Turk war of 1897 where the seemingly eternal fight over Crete was continued. Second, was the Serbian attempt to fight against the rule of the Turks, and any nearby neighbors, in an attempt to become a freestanding nation. The remainder of the nationalities entered their struggle against the Turks in the First Balkan War that did not come until 1912. Third, was the Austrian-Serbian disagreement over ownership of Bosnia-Herzegovina. And, fourth and most divisive, was the struggle to own Macedonia. This resulted in a diplomatic struggle, but also led directly to the Second Balkan War in 1913. During this period of relative Great Power calm, no Balkan nation was satisfied with its situation.

From the viewpoint of the Western European powers at the time, the lives and boundaries of the Balkan nations were relatively unimportant. This would probably be true of any study of any conflict occurring on the Balkan Peninsula. The critical nature of the situation never appears until the geographical location is examined relative to the interests of the Great Powers, or Super Powers, of the appropriate time. With the Bosphorus Straits the only way for Russian warships to transit from the Black Sea into the Mediterranean, the Straits remained critical to the interests of Russia. Likewise, as long as the Austrian-Hungarian Empire was made up of ethnic Slavs in the countries now known as Croatia and Slovenia, it was in the best interests of the Austrians to encourage either instability south of their borders or attempt to incorporate the rest of the Slavs into

their Empire. These interests were paramount in all considerations made by these Great Powers.

The complex diplomatic relationships between the Great Powers were insufficiently flexible to allow military intervention to stop the First or Second Balkan Wars. Without consultation with both allies and opponents, the Great Powers were unable to enter a conflict without fear of starting a major conflagration that would overwhelm Europe. When the Austro-Hungarian Empire declared war against Serbia, whom Austrian leaders perceive to be behind the assassination of the Austrian Archduke and his wife, Russia reacted rapidly to support her ally. Russia's need to maintain the alliance was driven by her desire to maintain a sphere of influence in the Balkans, but also by the Pan-Slavic sentiment of the Russian populous. Thus, the seemingly unimportant assassination of an Archduke, whom the Austrian-Hungarian Emperor disliked anyway, led directly to the First World War. During the Great War, the diplomacy of the Great Powers also failed to cause Bulgaria to maintain her neutrality. With Bulgaria's entry into the conflict, the Entente assurances that they could provide any needed reinforcements to Serbia in plenty of time were proved false and Serbia was decimated.

Analysis: The Bottom Line before the Interwar Period

The Balkan tribes that became nations in the late 1800s failed to cooperate or assist each other. This trend continued into the early 20th century. The loosening grip of the aging Ottoman Empire allowed the nationalism of these peoples to develop into statehood based on ethnic or religious beliefs. In the process, however, the removal of the external Ottoman threat also allowed the nations to resume their inter-Slav conflicts and land grabbing based on perceived historical rights. A modern military commander who

enters this region must remain cognizant of these facets and the challenges in the region. Analysis of this period shows three distinct trends that make up these facets.

First, a commander entering this situation must understand that political realities, as seen by Great Powers or Super Powers, are often not aligned with the priorities of the national leadership of these smaller nations. The Great Powers perceived the land control issues resolved in the Treaty of Berlin of 1878, yet none of the Balkan nations agreed to this compromise. Despite having just fought a major war, Bulgaria made the poor decision to initiate The Second Balkan War against her allies of the preceding year, in an attempt to nullify the Russian-Ottoman diplomatic resolution of the First Balkan War. Viewed from the western perspective, these decisions seem ludicrous. Yet, viewed from an historical perspective, such decisions are made repeatedly. Some of these decisions are also made despite the best interests of the governed people.

Second, the inability of Balkan leaders to compromise is a major factor that modern commanders must anticipate when operating in the region. While it would have been in the best interests of ante bellum Russia to avoid a major conflict with Austria-Hungarian or the Ottoman Empires, the Balkan leaders remain focused on the local priorities, regardless of what was best for their indigenous populations. Not only should the perpetrators of the Archduke's assassination have been captured and extradited to Austria, history indicates that Serbia should have sent the leaders of the Black Hand to Austria as well. In the end, though, the Serbian leaders refused to compromise on these essential facts. "Serbia rejected the key points about Austrian interference in domestic judicial and police work. Pasic knew this meant war, and the Serbian army began to mobilize even before the reply was complete"⁴ The Great War caused not only the

hundreds of thousands of senseless Serbian deaths mentioned earlier, but also Serbian suffering in Bosnia. “World War I was brutal in the Balkans, with heavy losses suffered by all. A large number of Bosnian-Serbs were either forcefully evicted from Bosnia to Serbia and Montenegro, or killed.”⁵ But, the decision that a US commander predicts to be the smart decision is not the one that he or she may expect that a local Balkan leader may make. Unfortunately, this is often because the “truth” of a situation that the local leaders understand may not be based on fact.

Third, reading modern accounts of deaths and damages done during World War I is challenging because of the lack of fact-based reality behind modern secondary sources. Because these accounts are often based, as discovered in Chapter 2, on a slanted perception based on myth or rumor, they are not always useful to a western educated reader. In the Orthodox-Christian sponsored account of the fighting during the 1915 Battle of Kosovo (as opposed to all of the other times Serbia has been defeated on those battlefields), the Albanians are blamed for many of the deaths. “Albanian unrestricted violence against the defenseless Serbian population in Kosovo and elsewhere, in the period 1903-1912,”⁶ caused much difficulty in later decades. Having read dozens of accounts on the results of the Great War, this account is the only one discovered with that slant. That book does not reference the fact that Albania had only been in existence for less than 3 years and that the Serbians had just besieged the region in order to capture a sea port on the Adriatic Sea. As described previously, Albania was created at the insistence of the Great Powers in order to frustrate Serbia’s goal, but revenge at the local level is certainly not unheard of in the Balkans. This example demonstrates that modern commanders must take special care to examine the viewpoint of various actions and

reactions in modern books and articles. Most US military leaders understand this intellectually and can make this effort. The local leader will make decisions without taking this approach because either his “understanding” of the situation is from personal perspective or his regard for an alternate perspective is non-existent. A modern military leader may not be able to change the understanding of the local leader, but he or she must understand that the local decisions are not always based on facts.

Three wars in five years is extreme, even for the Balkan Peninsula. These wars were fought between different groups in different terrain and with different objectives. Yet all of these wars create the pattern that demonstrates that a modern military commander must enter this region understanding that local leaders make decisions based on local conditions, they are often unable or unwilling to compromise and their understanding is not always based on fact. Examining the Interwar Period and World War II in Chapter 4 will bring these and further points to light.

¹L.S. Stavrianos, *The Balkans Since 1453*, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965), 405.

²Charles F Horne, Ed. *Source Records of the Great War, Vol. III*. National Alumni 1923, available from http://www.firstworldwar.com/source/serbia1915_falkenhayn.htm accessed 28 April 2007.

³Stephen Pope et. Al., *The Dictionary of the First World War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 203.

⁴Sowards, Steven W, “Twenty-Five Lectures on Modern Balkan History” *The Balkans in the Age of Nationalism*. Available from <http://www.lib.msu.edu/sowards/balkan/lect15.htm>; accessed 28 April 2007.

⁵Thierry Domin, “History of Bosnia and Herzegovina from the origins to 1992: The Austro-Hungarian Era in Bosnia”, *SFOR Informer#120*, (Sarajevo: Stabilization Force Public Affairs, August 22, 2001.)

⁶William Dorich, *Kosovo* (Alhambra, CA: Kosovo Charity Fund, 1992) available at <http://www.srpska-mreza.com/bookstore/kosovo/kosovo5.htm>; accessed 28 May 2007.

CHAPTER 4

INTERWAR FAILURE AND WORLD WAR II

Force has been the normal means of changing rulers in the Balkan Peninsula. But, following World War I, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes came into being by agreement between other nations. Historians who study the First World War almost invariably at least mention the Archduke's assassination in Sarajevo. The majority usually then transfer their focus to the battlefields of Western Europe and the horrible battles and high casualty trench warfare that occurred there. For the Balkans, however, the truth of their reality was that the war was horrific. The British and Turks fought a great deal in the Dardanelles and there was a war's worth of battles in Adrianople. But looking at numbers is revealing, as the combined population of 5 million in Serbia and Montenegro suffered 300,000 soldiers killed and 500,000 civilians died¹. Pope puts the totals even higher, with a greater look into non-battle deaths, but, from a modern perspective, either number inspired horror.

Their [Serbia's] little kingdom had been bled white by the war, suffering a relatively greater loss of men and wealth than any other participant in that worldwide slaughter. . . . Serbia's per capita battle casualties were two-and-one-half times those of France and three times those of the United Kingdom and Italy. Direct and indirect war losses, resulting from both battle casualties and a devastating typhus epidemic, amounted to one-fifth of her population.²

These casualties were in addition to the huge losses of the 1912 and 1913 Balkan Wars. But, the recent experience of the Balkan Wars produced a Serbian military which, when combined with its willingness to take such losses (or their unwillingness to capitulate) developed an impressive record of success in World War I against the Central Powers. The result of this record was the creation of Yugoslavia. Unfortunately, the Kingdom of

the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, created by treaty in the Balkan Peninsula during the Interwar period, failed to become a viable nation-state.

First conceived by Slav leaders still under the rule of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in November of 1914, it was a treasonous concept. When Croatia's Ante Trumbic', Frano Supilo, Ivan Meatrovic', Hinko Hinkovic' and Franko Potocnjak met with Nikola Stojanovic' and Duan Vasiljevic' from Bosnia and Herzegovina, they gathered in Florence, Italy to meet the Serbian government representative Pavle Popovic'. The Kingdom of Montenegro's Lujo Vojnovic' was there as well. Seeking to avoid becoming part of Italy, in the aftermath of the war, Slovene and Croatian leaders sought safety from their ethnic brethren. Nikola Paic's' Serbian government was not particularly interested in bringing Catholic foreigners into the union that already included Muslim Bosniaks. And, the Serbian focus for Adriatic port cities was certainly through Montenegro and Albania, which avoided a number of terrain problems going through mountainous areas to the north. But, with the fall of their Tsarist patrons, the need for a larger nation was obvious and the victorious powers created the country of Yugoslavia. In the Treaty of St-Germain-en-Laye of 10 September 1919, the Kingdom was formally created. The text reads:

Whereas since the commencement of the year 1913 extensive territories have been added to the Kingdom of Serbia, and
Whereas the Serb, Croat and Slovene peoples of the former Austro Hungarian Monarchy have of their own free will determined to unite with Serbia in a permanent union for the purpose of forming a single sovereign independent State under the title of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, and
Whereas the Prince Regent of Serbia and the Serbian Government have agreed to this union, and in consequence the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes has been constituted and has assumed sovereignty over the territories inhabited by these peoples, and . . .
Whereas the Serb-Croat-Slovene State of its own free will desires to give to the

populations of all territories included within the State, of whatever race, language or religion they may be, full guarantees that they shall continue to be governed in accordance with the principles of liberty and justice.³

The “extensive territories” that were added included Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Kingdom of Montenegro. The Treaty of Trianon added the entirety of Macedonia, the hotbed of Balkan hostility during the Balkan Wars, in 1920. With the addition of the northern Catholic people, the Orthodox Vojvodina and the Sandjak (district) of Novi Bazar, an entirely new nation was formed. Most scholars consider these treaties to be the ones that broke up the Austro-Hungarian Empire. They did do that. For the first time in the Balkans, though, these treaties also created a nation, purely through diplomatic agreement. Unlike the enlargement of Romania, the creation of Hungary from the ashes of Hapsburg Empire, or the re-emergence of Poland from external domination, which also occurred at the end of World War I, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was made from parts of five different countries. The complexity is obvious, but the failure of this state structure, in less than 10 years, was a new record.

The eagerness of the Slovene and Croats resulted in too-rapid an agreement to the treaty without ensuring the definitions of the aforementioned “principles of liberty and justice”. With their panic over becoming vassals to Italy, the political elites of Slovenia and Croatia made no attempt to gain popular support and or to leverage the bargaining power of their excellent Croatian regiments of the Hapsburg military or their control of Austria’s remaining navy. Thus no promises of universal suffrage or confederation structure were developed. Thus, the Serbian governing structure was applied whole cloth and the new northern regions were not happy. Ten months before the treaty was even signed, there were armed clashes in Zagreb in December of 1918 and over 150,000

Croatian people petitioned the Great Powers for an independent nation. The Serbian government removed the Croatian leaders of their military and reassigned the units to guard provincial garrisons along the Bulgarian border and in Macedonia. Meanwhile, Serbian units were moved into the northern regions to “safeguard” against the Austrians and Italians. For the first two years, the Kingdom of Serbia’s army and bureaucracy managed the new nation as if nothing had changed. Shortly after, the country’s new constitution and structure of a constitutional monarchy was in place. No one would argue that the country ran smoothly, but it did run. The creaky machine lasted until early 1929 when an ethnic Serbian nationalist leader from Montenegro, Punisa Racic, shot and killed Stjepan Radic, head of the Croatian Peasant Party, in parliament. On 6 January 1929, King Alexander successfully staged a coup d’etat and re-established personal dictatorship. Renaming the state as the “Kingdom of Yugoslavia”, he revoked the right to vote and the freedom of the press. Despite an active reform campaign to trim bureaucracy and waste, he was unable to restrain the violence and uprisings, though, and allowed election in 1931. His unwillingness to put some of the power of administration in the hands of the non-Serbs in his Kingdom alienated any elites likely to be able to assist his transformation efforts. His assassination in 1934, caught on film in France, transferred power to his cousin as regent for his young son. His official title of “King-Unifier” was quite undeserved. His cousin, Prince Pavle (Paul), on the other hand, came to power in a rare moment of unification in reaction to an external assassination, and similarly failed to unify the nation. Despite a more genuinely “Yugoslavian” outlook, meaningful elections, and smart appointments, the Axis invasion on 6 April 1941, found a state willing to fall apart.

Diplomatic Debacle

Yugoslavia's interwar history, closed in April 1941, holds the distinction of being an extraordinary failure. The ethnic differences were not reconciled. The Second World War made them worse. The religious differences were, somehow, reasons to desire to kill one's neighbor. Between the wars, when the nation was first created, the differences in dialect, within the same language, was sufficient cause for a separate standard for taxation. The Serbian belief that the former Austrian regions owed much for the right to be defended following the First World War conflicted with the Croat/Slovene belief that their Hapsburg-installed road and railways were exploited purely to serve Serbian elites. With no formal assurances of rights and taxation, the artificial state began with turmoil guaranteed to destroy it. The Tito regime that followed the Second World War can be accused of using the exact same exploitive techniques to contain the internal hostilities, but it was done by force. Clearly, a nation cannot be created out of people this diverse without significant military force to restrain their desires to rule themselves. Even without the foreknowledge of the dissolution of Yugoslavia in the late Twentieth century, it appears simple to predict this failure of state creation by diplomatic means.

The Road to World War II

Alexander's cousin, Prince Pavle, came to power in a rare moment of unification in reaction to an assassination. The assassination, conducted by the Croatian nationalist group called The Ustashe⁴, appeared to be conducted externally because the resistance movement was operating out of Mussolini's Italy. Elections following Pavle's ascension to power resulted in a Bosnian prime minister who attempted to moderate some of the harsh dictatorial rule and increase positive ties to Hitler's Germany when the Nazis came

to power. In an attempt to develop more Croatian support for the Yugoslavian government, Paval appointed a new Croatian prime minister. In late 1939, the Croatian Banovina (similar to a unicameral parliament) gained autonomy and was enlarged in a real power-sharing arrangement, much to the detriment of the Bosniac ethnic groups in Mostar. Instead of encouraging solidarity, unfortunately, this act was met with hostility by both the socialists, because it was “anti-national”, and the Croatian nationalists, who wanted real independence.

In the winter of 1940-41, Germany forced Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria to remain true to the Tripartite Pact. The Yugoslav government, which was actively attempting to maintain Yugoslavia as a nation, was forced to sign this pact on 25 March 1941, despite their declaration that “[Yugoslavia] will take most determined steps not to be drawn into the present conflict.”⁵ The following night, the military leadership of Yugoslavia staged a coup in the name of King Peter (still a minor by almost 6 months), who was an Oxford-educated Anglophile with open British sympathies. They forced Regent Paval, the recent unifier of the pro-Axis Croatian region, and his co-regents to leave the country. Mass demonstrations in Belgrade, supporting armed resistance to the Axis, indicated popular approval of the coup and Bosniac and Croatian senior political elites joined the government over the following days.

Consequently, Hitler ordered Yugoslavia destroyed as a nation. The new government was incapable of resisting because the government ruled by Regent Paval had not succeeded in developing sufficient domestic consensus and national solidarity. Hitler was unwilling to allow the Kingdom of Yugoslavia to maintain its “categorical neutrality.” Unfortunately, the militarily sound decision to defend in the mountainous

Bosnian region, instead of the northern border, was politically impossible. The Axis attack and subsequent invasion began on 6 April 1941. Despite exact warnings from a military attaché in Germany that the attack on Yugoslavia would occur on that date, as late as 5 April the Yugoslavian prime-minister was still assuring his cabinet that conflict might be avoided⁶.

The Initial War

At 0515, German bombers initiated the conflict by bombing Belgrade. Estimates of dead as a result were 17,000⁷ by the Yugoslavians and 15-25,000⁸ by the Luftwaffe. In any case, this attack was a demonstration of total control of the air. The Luftwaffe operated at will during the invasion and air attacks continued for the next 12 days. The ground conflict was equally decisive.

The million-man military of Yugoslavia contained a mere two battalions of antiquated armor so they were never going to be a match for the Axis attack. Unfortunately, the infantry and cavalry divisions were not fully mobilized due to the misguided optimism of the new national leadership. With a plan based on defending the external borders in a static defense, the active units were quickly penetrated and outflanked. Although even books specifically addressing the German Balkan Campaign (Operation 25) have very little information on what actually occurred, some things are well known (see Fig. 1). On 6 April, the German XIV Panzer Corps of the First Panzer Group in Bulgaria attacked the Third and Fifth Yugoslav Army Groups protecting Nis and Leskovac. Because mobilization was not complete, only the active forces of the Third and Fifth were available and they were decisively defeated. The 9th Panzer Division then continued south to seize Skopje, effectively taking control of Macedonia

from the Yugoslavs. Macedonia was then granted to the Bulgarians, faithful adherents to the Tripartite Pact, in accordance with the Bulgarian belief that the province rightfully belonged to them. On 8 April, the 11th Panzer Division of the XIV Panzer Corps then continued north, up the Marava river valley, to attack Belgrade from the South. Simultaneously, the XLI Independent Corps (mainly SS) penetrated the border defenses from Rumania and to easily outmaneuvered and destroyed the limited defenses established by the mobilizing the Sixth Yugoslav Army north and northeast of Belgrade. At the same time, the Third Hungarian Army invaded and enveloped the First Yugoslav's Frontier Forces between the Danube and Tisla rivers defeating their attempt to mobilize effectively. On 10 April, the 14th Panzer Division of the German XLVI Panzer Corps, the LI Corps, and IL Mountain Corps, attacked into Croatia heading for Zagreb where they met little resistance. The chief of staff of the First (Croatian) Army Group helped open talks between the Ustashe leadership and the Germans. Meanwhile, the VIII Panzer Division penetrated the Fourth Yugoslav Army Group and continued down the Sava River valley unmolested thanks to the Third Hungarian's operation. By 11 April, Slovenia and Croatia had already declared independence and allegiance to the Axis. By 12 April, the 8th Panzer Division had closed on Belgrade from the north-west, the XLI Independent Corps closed from the north-east, and the XI Panzer Division closed from the south. By 15 April, divisions finished defeating resistance in Belgrade and Zagreb had closed with and defeated Yugoslav Second Army forces in Sarajevo. At the same time, Italian divisions from the Second and the Eleventh Italian Corps had met from the north and south to seize the coastal port of Dubrovnik behind the Dalmatian mountains. While a limited amount of more detailed information is available, the point is that it took

the Germans mere weeks to defeat the Yugoslavian military. If the Yugoslavian military had fully mobilized and conducted a Fabian defense in the mountains with close coordination with the Greeks, the limited amounts of military forces and logistical support afforded by the Allies might have delayed the inevitable. With no national solidarity, no Balkan unity, and no awakening to the reality that war was imminent, the Blitz was irresistible.



Figure 3. Campaign in the Balkans (1941)

Source: Military.com, *Map 17: Campaign The Balkans (April 1941)*, online at http://www.military.com/Resources/ResourceFileView?file=worldwarII_europe_maps.htm accessed on 28 April 2007.

The last meeting of the Royal Council was held on 13 April and King Peter II fled to Greece on the 15th. The prime minister and council followed on 15 April leaving a total leadership vacuum in the country where the military had already been destroyed as a fighting unit. Eventually, a politician, who had been under guard by the leaders of the new government, was found by the remaining senior military leadership and he signed the document to surrender unconditionally on 17 April 1941.

The Results

Following the defeat, Germany summarily disassembled Yugoslavia (see figure 2). Slovenia became two states, with the majority annexed by Austria. Italy annexed the smaller portion, consisting mainly of the city of Ljubljana and called it, appropriately, the Province of Ljubljana. Italy also annexed Dalmatia, all of the Adriatic islands and the Gulf of Kotor. Italy, Albania's ruler, also gained control of a small portion of western Macedonia, a small bit of Montenegro and the majority of the Kosovo-Metohija region. As mentioned above, Bulgaria claimed most of Macedonia and a small portion of the Kosovo region. The Vojvodina region was divided into two countries, one of which (*Bachka*) was annexed by Hungary and one of which became the country of Banat, which was administered by the puppet German government in Belgrade. The Independent State of Croatia was ruled, in theory, by the Croatian National Government in Zagreb, an Ustashe regime declared on 9 April 1941. In reality, the country was divided into two regions, controlled by the Italians and Germans respectively. Serbia, in its 1912 form, became a puppet state under the command of a German general. The pre-war expectations of Italy were certainly not met. This breakup secured almost all strategically

important minerals and logistic resources for Germany leaving Italy, Hungary, and Bulgaria to scramble for the remains.



Figure 4. The Axis-Dominated Balkans, 1941-1944

Source: Hupchick and Cox, *The Palgrave Concise Historical Atlas of The Balkans*, Map 44.

It took the Nazis almost three weeks to overwhelm Yugoslavia and Greece. Only Hitler's focus on invading Russia, and the resulting withdrawal of Nazi divisions to the Eastern Front before they were done mopping up, allowed the resistance movement to remain alive after such a relentless beating.

The Germans also attempted to keep as many ethnic feuds active as possible. The Albanians in Kosovo were organized into a division whose job seems to have been to kill as many Serbs as they could find. The Ustashe were encouraged to de-Serbanize their nation via genocide, forced migration and forced conversion to Catholicism. The sizable Jewish populations that had lived unmolested through the preceding millennium were sent north to Germany. The Serbians retaliated when ever they could, especially once the resistance movements were formed.

The Occupation

During the occupation, there were three distinct forces fighting for three distinct goals. The focus of the victorious Axis forces was clearly successful occupation and exploitation. German, Italian, Bulgarian and Hungarian forces immediately went to work to integrate the production capability of their particular region into their own war making efforts. Thus, the goal of the actual soldiers occupying each region was to keep the peace. The intent of the second group of people was to ensure that the wartime governments and nations remained permanent. This was true in both Croatia and Albania.

The desire of the Ustashe in the new Independent State of Croatia was to become a legitimate nation ruled entirely by Croatians, despite their inclusion of all of modern-day Bosnia and Herzegovina regions. To this end, they took great pains to endear themselves to the Germans. They provided a great deal of military manpower for both

production and policing. They also focused strongly on ensuring that only Croats remained in Croatia proper and the Herzegovina region. The numbers of dead due to the actions of the Ustashe soldiers and police is extremely problematic. “The question of war losses during World War II represents the most divisive, heated and emotional issue among all of the nationalities of the former Yugoslavia during the post-War period.”⁹ Needless to say, the very low numbers reported by Dr. Vladimir Zerjavic, a widely quoted Holocaust revisionist, and Dr. Mirko Valentic, director of Croatian Institute of History, do not agree with the figures produced by Dr. Milan Bulajic, Director of the Museum of Victims of Genocide in Belgrade, a state-sponsored propaganda instrument. The 65 years since the end of World War II have done nothing to produce additional information that might clarify the numbers, but rather have produced even more conflicting “information” on this issue. There are numerous attempts to weed through this very heated debate. Some “studies” indicate as few as 125,000 Serbs were killed in Croatia, other “studies” indicate the number was more likely 750,000. Some quote a number over one million.

Due to differing views and lack of documentation, estimates for the number of Serbian victims in Croatia range widely, from 25,000 to more than one million...The most reliable figures place the number of Serbs killed by the Ustaša between 330,000 and 390,000.¹⁰

It is clear that the Croats did make significant efforts to do their part to continue the Final Solution. The new government passed numerous restrictive laws in the summer of 1941. These laws resulted in the disposition and persecution of (at least) tens of thousands of Jews, Gypsies, Muslims and Serbs. They established at least eight concentration camps where internees starved to death, died of exposure, or were killed by Ustashe guards. German records indicate that at least 7,000 Jews were entrained to Polish

liquidation centers and estimate that up to 30,000 Croatian Jews were killed in all. The goal of the Croats in killing Serbs was different, but focused on the same result: only Croats would remain in Croatia. Even the German officers were reportedly horrified by the amount of killing conducted by the Ustashe government¹¹

The Albanians conducted similar, though less publicized actions in Kosovo. Numbers are not nearly as easy to find, especially with the proliferation of propaganda in the wake of the 1998-1999 conflict in Kosovo. However, it seems obvious that the official and quasi-military units created by the Albanians and the Kosovar Albanians had the similar goal to ensuring that only Albanians remained in Albania. While they were less successful, the numbers remain in the tens of thousands for expelled and killed Serbians that had previously lived in Kosovo.

In both cases, the German encouragement of these independence and reorganization movements met the needs of the Germans. In any situation where the forces of the occupied areas were fighting each other, they were not fighting against the Germans. Cleverly sparing Croatian cities during the initial attacks, the Germans encouraged and fostered the Croatian rebellion while they destroyed the military of Yugoslavia without distraction. By allowing the Croats to manage their own internal affairs, so long as they met the German requirements for production, they focused Serbian hatred at the Croats. Similarly, the Albanians were left to manage Serbian resistance to Albanian domination under Italian control, which did not distract the Germans. The Bulgarian re-occupation of Macedonia likewise forced the Bulgarians to deal with ethnic Serb and Greek resistance within Macedonia, again, freeing the Germans to focus on the Soviet Union.

Finally, the third side of the triangle was made up of the two major resistance movements within Serbia, both fighting for domination of Yugoslavia. The Yugoslavs could not even agree to resist the Nazis together. The first resistance was the remains of the scattered Yugoslavian army units. In the extra days afforded the Second Yugoslav Army before Sarajevo was surrounded, Colonel Drazha Mihailovic, a career Serbian army officer, retreated to the mountains in Bosnia with a small group of men who refused to capitulate. The first of the officially recognized resistance groups, these *Chetniks* (named after the *cheta*, resistors of Turkish occupation in the 1800s) attempted to build an entire organization for coordinated resistance. The royalist Mihailovic was named commander of the Yugoslav army by the Government-in-Exile. Emphasizing a return of control of Yugoslavia to the Serbians, his seemingly highly organized bureaucratic structure encouraged initial fervor, but the slow pace and ineffectiveness, combined with poorly disciplined troops and unwillingness to accept risk, resulted in limited effectiveness. And, according to recent propaganda from Serbia, their primary goal was to resist the attacks of the Ustashe against Serbs in Bosnia

His competition was born Josep Broz, later nicknamed Tito who based his efforts around the underground communist party of Yugoslavia. Tito's organizational skills were as sharp, but honed in a different manner. Throwing his lot in with the Bolsheviks while a Russian prisoner of war captured as an Austro-Hungarian non-commissioned officer, he was a dedicated communist when released to Croatia in 1920. He became the Yugoslav Communist Party secretary general following the death of his predecessor at the hands of Stalin. Long persecuted, his experience in remaining underground was quite helpful when he established the Partisans with the goal of throwing off German domination and

establishment of a communist regime. Willing to undergo reprisals against the bourgeois middle-class and city dwellers, the Partisans attacked throughout the occupation eventually overcoming their second place status as a resistance movement.

Initially favoring the Chetniks, Allied support switched to the USSR-favored Partisans because of their willingness to take action. Almost destroyed in the winter of 1941 without Chetnik cooperation, the Partisans fought back. Even within the surviving Communists, however, there was a right and left wing, split over whether Macedonia should be allowed to separate from Yugoslavia after the war ended. But, with the Chetniks conducting over 50 percent of their operations against the ideologically different Partisans, the Chetniks lost effectiveness throughout the war. At the same time, the Partisans attacked military, indoctrinated populous and destroyed every semblance of the old royal system of government. This included a number of attacks, as often as feasible against the Chetnik forces. By November 1942, the National Liberation Army of Yugoslavia had come into being. Their disruption of the Yugoslavian transportation system finally forced the German leadership to take their threat seriously. Only Hitler's focus on invading Russia, and the resulting pull out of Nazi divisions to the Eastern Front before they were done mopping up, allowed the resistance movement to remain alive after such a relentless beating. Without moving additional forces back into Yugoslavia, the Germans would have been ejected by mid-1943. However, despite a dozen fresh divisions and over 100 sorties per day, the Germans could not defeat the Partisan bands. Mihailovic's failure to demonstrate his value to the Allied war effort to the British in December 1943 caused the allied to abandon the Chetniks. By the spring of 1944, the 300,000 person Partisan army was receiving over 3,000 tons of logistical aid per month¹²

as well as instructors in military affairs (such as artillery and demolitions) and thousands of sorties to support attacks and movements. By the time the Soviet forces arrived to finalize the defeat of Axis forces in the Balkans, the success of the Partisan forces had ensured they would establish the post-war Yugoslavian government. The official similarity to the ideology of the Soviets may have ensured it anyway, but the self-determination that was made possible by success established its legitimacy in the eyes of the Yugoslavians. Mihailovich and his military style resistance did live through the war, but at the end, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, led by their Secretary-General Broz, was the eventual inheritor of the national leadership of Yugoslavia.

Postwar Yugoslavia

In the immediate aftermath of the war, Tito's primary goal remained establishing rule over the former Kingdom of Yugoslavia in his own vision. In 1944, King Peter was "encouraged" by the British to dismiss his government and did so. King Peter then appointed the former Croatian governor, Ivan Subasic, his prime minister. Tito and Subasic then hammered out a post-war peace agreement full of pro-democratic phraseology. Tito stated that he did not intend to force communism onto Yugoslavia. He planned elections and designed the provisional government with non-communists prominently involved. Once the Soviets captured Belgrade, it was turned over to the Partisans and all pretenses were dropped. The bloody house-cleaning of "collaborators" had the not-so-serendipitous effect of getting most non-communists out of government or shuffled to obscurity. Soviet style elections resulted in a landslide for Tito, thus confirming communist domination was the "will of the people." From the start of the Partisan movement, the goal of a communist Yugoslavia was paramount.

Dividing the new nation into six “republics” was the first step to Tito’s plan to divide and conquer. Slovenia was easy to delineate and caused no uproar. The Bosnia-Herzegovina region was sliced off Croatia. Montenegro, though ethnically Serbian, was taken from Serbia. Macedonia became a republic once Bulgaria was forced to relinquish the region by the victorious allies. Serbia was further insulted by the creation of the Vojvodina and the Kosovo autonomous regions within their borders. Tito then declared the nationalism problem solved and forbade further discussion, backed up by internal security police. The government of the republics was then entrusted to the hands of Tito-loyalist communists from other regions. Serbian government and their state-controlled economy and production were managed by Partisan Croats. Croatia was similarly run by Serbs or Bosniacs.

The national governing system ran very smoothly following this. Each republic sent elected representatives to Belgrade. There was a bicameral legislative body, one with republic representatives and one made up of popular representatives. Unlike the west, however, nominations for the positions were controlled by the Communist Party and only one name was available to “vote” for in each position. This allowed the elections to be a propaganda means by which “the people” were able to maintain a firm, stable government that prevented dissent. The Soviet-modeled internal security police force, established before Tito was even in full control, ensured the government ran smoothly throughout using the normal tools of repression: murder, propaganda, fear and force.

With the Communist Party’s need to build popular legitimacy, they focused very clearly on youth programming. State directed schools, national youth programs, and “voluntary” reconstruction labor programs all focused on ensuring that the young would

grow up as proper communists. The “unreliable” teachers, meaning all of them, underwent significant ideological “reeducation” and their behavior was reported on by the students. In the schools, religion was mocked, where possible, and strict laws were placed on religious leadership to prevent seeking converts.

Other restrictions on religion prevented seeking of money and building new churches. Media outlets were, likewise, restricted to operating under the restrictions established to maintain Communist power. The Soviet model also provided the “expertise” for managing the state-controlled economy with results similar to those of the Soviets. In 1948, the Yugoslavian Communist Party severed ties to the Soviets, but the basic political system was firmly in place with Tito at the head.

Analysis: The Bottom Line for Pre- and Post-WWII Years

By focusing specifically on Yugoslavia, the center of much of the pre- and post-World War II fighting, it is possible to see additional facets to challenges facing a modern military leader that goes to the Balkans. In previous chapters, analysis indicated that people in the Balkans have long memories, though sometimes these “memories” are created from viewpoint and not fact. Preceding chapters also described unwillingness to compromise and the inability of local politicians to make decisions based on the good of the people who are affected. These lessons are relearned in this chapter along with several new insights into the realities faced by any military commander sent to work in the Balkans. The inability to compromise, though, initially seems to be disproved in the first years of the Interwar Period.

The political leaders who gathered in Italy to determine the post-World War I fate seem to belie to the assertion that Balkan leaders cannot compromise for the good of their

people. Unfortunately, for the Yugoslav people, it turns out to be very true when it comes to the details. With the 1917 Russian Revolution, Serbia found herself without the backing of any Great Power. This meant that Serbia, above all other consideration, had to secure patronage or they would be excluded entirely at the peace negotiations. This meant that Serbia was forced to do something to endear themselves to Great Britain and/or France. Thus, when the “Yugoslav committee” was formed at the insistence of France, former Prime Minister Pasic and King Alexander acquiesced and joined the committee. Croatia and Slovenia, for their part, were afraid that Italy would annex much of the land they considered theirs. Their fears were well founded, since the secret 1915 Treaty of London¹³ to bring Italy into the war on the side of the Entente, clearly indicated that Italy would gain control of much of the bordering Austro-Hungarian lands. These lands included all of Dalmatia, which Italy continued to demand through World War II. When the Corfu Declaration was finally announced on 20 July 1917, it was also clear that Serbian self interest drove the Serbs to align themselves with the west. This declaration, later formalized in the Treaty of St-Germain-en-Laye, mentioned earlier, gave the Serbians control of much of the Balkan Peninsula, nearly as large as Greater Serbia 1000 years earlier. Of course, they would have preferred to have annexed Slovenia and Croatia outright, but the following years demonstrated that the Serbs act as if they had done just that. Despite the carefully worded declaration and treaty, the Serbians then went about squeezing the other two ethnicities and, for the most part, ignoring the phrases of equality in the carefully worded documents. Thus, self interest is the controlling motivator displayed by these political leaders. A modern military commander must

expect to find this to be true in all of his or her dealings in the Balkans. Discrimination is another thing he or she must expect.

As this lack of cooperation demonstrates, inclusiveness in the political dealings between ethnicities did not, and does not, exist. As described, the expectations of different ethnicities in the Interwar period doomed the diplomatically created nation. The Croats and Slovenes wanted representation and true equality, the Serbs wanted reparations. The concept that they should cooperate towards the greater good seems beyond their comprehension. Because they came from different tribes hundreds of years earlier, or because they worshiped the same God differently, they find nothing odd about exploiting their power to another's detriment. This is true at the local level, where taxes were determined by ethnicity. It was also true at the national level. The Jewish population of the Balkans was murdered or exiled in World War II even more fiercely than the Serbian population of Bosnia in World War I. The results of this discrimination in the Interwar Period fanned the flames of pre-Ottoman resentment into full scale warfare during World War II.

Having failed to reach compromise with the Serbs of Yugoslavia, the Slovenes and Croats of Yugoslavia welcomed the Germans to a greater or lesser extent – depending on which accounts are examined. The Croatian puppet government worked tirelessly against the Serbians during World War II. Slovenia was both further away and less ethnically integrated, so had less impact for ethnic cleansing and fighting between the nations, but certainly accommodated the demands of Nazi Germany. In both cases, the re-establishment of inter-ethnic hostilities demonstrated by both sides in the Interwar Period flared brightly during World War II. Even within Serbia, this ethnic-hostility

reaction increased between the Albanians who supported the Nazis in Kosovo and the populous they suppressed. Thus, a military leader going to the Balkans should be aware that perception of previous wrongs is a powerful motivator of continued or resumed hostilities or fighting. The same can be said of almost any war in similar mountainous terrain, ethnic fault-lines and religious intersections such as those in the Post-Soviet Caucasus or Afghanistan. The historical myths that the political leaders seek to enflame are often the ones of this period of time and are, thus, highly effective. Controlling the people and their passions is very, very challenging, as during- and post-World War II governments discovered.

Despite a quick victory that appeared to ensure the Nazi government would have an easy time controlling the Balkans, it turned out to be the opposite. Numerous books and articles argue that the diversion of divisions to the Balkans was a blunder that made the German attack on Russia fail. That issue is much too large to introduce here, but over a dozen divisions and numerous air sorties were still ineffective in defeating the Partisans. These divisions were in addition to the encouragement of divisive ethnic movements and the eight divisions originally committed to controlling the Balkans. This proves that the people in the region are certainly able to be stubborn. It held true even following the war. To over simplify, Communist mythology demands that all people work together towards the good of the state. With the draconian measures of controlling the education, the religions and the political systems, the people were forced to suppress their dislike for each other. With the willingness to subjugate any subordinate desires, the Communist Party took control of the nation of Yugoslavia following the most fractious period in Balkan history. Throughout history, government after government had taken

over as rulers and attempted to impress their own stamp onto the region. Never before had anyone had to overcome multi-directional nationalism, with atrocities numbering in the millions, while also suppressing religious differences and imprinting the foreign communist ideology onto a nation previously ruled exclusively by a royal system. But, the absolute domination of the communist ideology refused to allow ethnic hatred, religious intolerance or nationalist desires to play a role in state formation. Clearly, no other situation was as stable in uniting this nation as the Tito-led communist dictatorship emplaced through force of arms and his ruthless reign of terror. As history has seen since, as soon as the yoke was lifted, the nation of Yugoslavia faced political paralysis and then disintegrated. The modern military leader going to the Balkans must be aware that the purely military effort of the Nazis failed, even using very large numbers of troops and extreme measures failed to force the region into subservience. Examinations of more modern fighting in historically conflicted areas, such as Northern Iraq or the Pakistan/Indian border, suggests that this phenomenon could be found in many places like these. As Tito demonstrated, these extreme measures can only work with draconian control of the public information sphere. A US commander may not wish to use these methods, but they are the only ones that have been effective in suppressing ethnic groups' desires to separate themselves in the Balkan.

¹Soward, Lecture 18.

²Joseph Rothschild, *East Central Europe between the Two World Wars* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1974), 206-7.

³“Treaty of St-Germain-en-Laye of 10 September 1919” *Australian Treaty Series 1920 No 3*

⁴Robert Donia and John V.A. Fine, Jr., *Bosnia and Hercegovina: a Tradition Betrayed*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 130.

⁵Arthur B. Lane, "Conquest of Yugoslavia," *Life*, (New York: Time-Life Books, 1941), 105.

⁶J.B. Hoptner, *Yugoslavia in Crisis 1934-1941* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1962), 283.

⁷*ibid*, 285.

⁸Stavrianos, *The Balkans since 1453*, 757.

⁹McAdams, *Croatia: Reality and Myth*, available at <http://mirror.veus.hr/myth/victims.html>; accessed 20 May 2007.

¹⁰United States Holocaust Memorial Museum available at: <http://www.ushmm.org/museum/exhibit/online/>; accessed 20 May 2007.

¹¹Alex N. Dragnich, *Serbs and Croats*, (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992), p. 103.

¹²Ronald H. Bailey, *Partisans and Guerillas*, (New York: Time-Life Books, 1978), 129.

¹³Great Britain, *Parliamentary Papers*, London, 1920, LI Cmd. 671, Miscellaneous No. 7, 2-7. available at <http://net.lib.byu.edu/~rdh7/wwi/1915/londontreaty.html>; accessed 28 April 2007.

CHAPTER 5

THE FINAL SOLUTION

The preceding chapters provided an historical overview of the Balkans leading up to and including the highly charged period A.D. 1900-1950. These portions of the timeline of the Balkan Peninsula include four major wars. This work has attempted to demonstrate how the wars resulted from the preceding “peace” and described the results of the fighting. With the benefit of historical perspective, this paper makes judgments as to the effectiveness of the warfare and details the causes of problems in the areas of language, religion and ethnicity. This unique overview perspective shows a reader that a government that conducts warfare against Balkan neighbors is ultimately doomed to repetition unless, as we saw in Chapter 4, the government executes an effective program to change the cultural education of the populace.

Admittedly, reading a number of general historical works might eventually provide a modern military leader with these insights. However, the intent of this monograph is to provide analysis of this history in order to enable a US military leader make effective decisions that have a chance to have a positive influence in the region. With US military leaders in recent years executing operations in the Balkan Peninsula, this monograph is oriented on providing future leaders useful and easy to read information for practical application. It would be disingenuous to pretend that the more recent history, and the lessons learned in recent US operations, were not behind many of these conclusions. Pertinent observations from earlier chapters will therefore be interpolated through the most recent 50 years to demonstrate their accuracy and

relevance. Thus, a review of recent history is required, focused here on the example of Yugoslavia.

During the 1990s, the country of Yugoslavia disintegrated. A communist state held together by the iron hand of Marshal Josip Broz “Tito” since the end of World War II took only ten years to begin to fall apart in to independent republics. During this ten year process, numerous groups attempted to rule each region. During that decade, four attempts to become independent states succeeded. Two attempts did not succeed. One or two attempts were stillborn. In 2006, Montenegro’s declaration of independence completed the dissolution of Yugoslavia back into the component tribal-based principalities that created it initially. Most of the successful independence movements accomplished their goals with differing amounts of outside help.

In the years immediately following the war, despite the fact (or, perhaps, because of the fact) that he was born and raised in Croatia, Tito’s government made great strides in organizing a nation that was inclusive of all the people in Yugoslavia. The government ruthlessly repressed any hints of nationalism, especially by people in the Croatian or Kosovo regions. Under the centralized communist government, industrial development and production were concentrated into easily controlled locations. These controlled locations were then positioned throughout Yugoslavia. Military officers of each ethnicity were intentionally distributed to postings throughout Yugoslavia to prevent association of particular military units with a particular republic. Moreover, religion was repressed in standard communist fashion¹. Tito’s death in 1980 signaled major changes in Yugoslavia.

During the 1980s, the problems in Yugoslavia appeared very similar to problems in most other communist/socialist countries of Eastern Europe. They had the standard problems of currency inflation and the resulting climb in foreign debt. Unemployment or underemployment created trouble with the buying power of the average citizen as well as time and energy for development of blossoming nationalist feelings. During this decade, communist control lost political ground to leaders who revived nationalist feelings to create their power blocs. The decade of 1980 was the beginning of the end for Yugoslavia, signaled by the development of a new constitution for the country following the death of Tito. With the new constitution, each year produced a new president from a different state. This allowed each state to regain contact with the concept that only their own leader would be willing to represent their needs and desires to the extent they wish. With the introduction of each new president from a new state, power and money flowed into the electing state and support to the other states decreased. This increased the feelings of resentment throughout the country.²

In 1990, Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina held multi-party elections where the communist reformers lost to groups supporting national independence³. At that point, most observers could easily predict the country of Yugoslavia's slide into chaos. In this chapter, each region is examined in order to observe the accuracy of the analysis of the preceding chapters.

Dissolutions in the 1990s: Slovenia

Slovenian independence was the third calmest of all the liberation events and, with the exception of the events in Macedonia and Montenegro, caused the least bloodshed. Slovenians considered this fight to be a war between independent nations

where Serbians were attempting to capture as much land as possible following the dissolution of Yugoslavia. In the end, Slovenia succeeded in becoming an independent country. During March of 1990, their national elections were the first multi-party elections in 50 years. Electoral victories by the nationalist parties set the stage for the breakup. Milan Kučan, a protestant and former communist leader, created a multi-party coalition government⁴.

In June of 1991, Slovenia followed the lead of Croatia in declaring independence. Approximately 90 percent of the population of Slovenia is also ethnically Slovenian. Tito's policy of enforcing multi-ethnic military units faded out during the 1980s and, by 1990, the majority of the military units stationed in Slovenia were lead by ethnic Slovenians. Most of the senior Yugoslav military leaders in Slovenia were Slovenian, but also realized that their units would be expected to fight. Under tight operational security, the leaders brought the Slovenian National Guard up to full strength and conducted considerable training with it. They also armed these units with military weapons purchased from outside Yugoslavia and brought them up to wartime readiness. With excellent knowledge of the mountainous terrain and good access to the Yugoslavian Army (JNA) communications, tactics, and training resources, the fight was not lop-sided as it was in later conflicts. When Slovenia evicted the Yugoslavian border guards and replaced them with Slovenians, the JNA moved in to reclaim the territory as Yugoslavia. Following defeat in the mountains and spontaneous support by unarmed civilians following the death of a student, the JNA negotiated and then withdrew from Slovenia. According to Slovene government estimates, only 18 Slovenians and 44 JNA soldiers were killed with less than 350 wounded on both sides⁵.

Following the withdrawal of the JNA, Slovenia's drive for independence was complete. While the people who ran the Slovenian government were different people, the actual governing structure changed very little. The leaders were elected by the populace in Slovenia. Those governing leaders then continued to operate the Slovenian government with the same bureaucracy and the same civil servants who had always operated the bureaucracy. The introduction of multi-party elections occurred prior to the change in government control. The social sphere underwent virtually no change. The ethnic tension in the region was almost non-existent before. Fewer than 10 percent of citizens considered themselves non-Slovenian. The people of Slovenia were (and are) almost universally Roman Catholic for those that express their identity in terms of religion. Minorities in Slovenia include Lutherans, other Protestants, Jews, and Muslims. In the case of Slovenia, the military units operating in and through Slovenia did not notice any huge changes for the lives of the people as a result of the governmental reorganization

Dissolutions in the 1990s: Macedonia

While Macedonia was not the next country to declare independence chronologically, it was the most successful. Macedonia declared itself independent on 8 September 1991. Initially uninvolved in the conflict to their north, the Communist leaders of this state were slow to move towards independence. Their initial preference was a confederation model proposed by the Croatian and Slovenian leaders. However, when Slovenia and Croatia withdrew publicly from Yugoslavia, Macedonia followed suit, despite significant opinions by the Bulgarians and Greeks that there should be no country of Macedonia. The move was very publicly popular with citizens who thought Macedonian troops in the JNA should not be fighting and dying to hold the other states in

Yugoslavia as well as small nationalist parties claiming to be descended from Alexander the Great⁶.

In 1992, the Yugoslav Army withdrew from Macedonia. The withdrawal was negotiated and occurred without a single shot being fired. The Serbs argued that other republics could have seceded from Yugoslavia in an equally orderly fashion had they not opted for violence. This seems to be rather untrue. The same lack of Serbian nationals living in Macedonia seems to have enabled the Serbian government to attempt to shape positive international political opinion by not contesting the withdrawal of Macedonia. Additionally, the fighting in Croatia had taken most of the front line strength of the JNA into Bosnia and Croatia and the special police units in Macedonia were made up of mostly Macedonian people, which complicated using them for repression. With the withdrawal of the JNA, the Macedonian armed forces then controlled the border, the police units continued to enforce the rule of law and the government continued to function. As in Slovenia, not much changed for the people of Macedonia.

Dissolutions in the 1990s: Croatia

The Croatian Democratic Union came into power with the multi-party elections in 1990. A retired JNA general named Franjo Tudjman was elected President. Croatia's opportunity to lead the federal presidency came in 1991. When the noncommunist, moderate Stipe Mesic, was selected, Milosevic denounced the election and prevented his installation. The Sabor, the Croat Parliament, then declared independence at the end of June 1991. They then drew up a constitution full of civil liberty and social rights guarantees for all of their citizens, including the 12 percent of the population that was Serbian that lived mostly in the Krajina region. These 12 percent of the people, and their

historical stories of the forced resettlement into the Krajina region, were a potent force of resistance to the departure of Croatia from Serbian-dominated Yugoslavia. During the spring negotiations of 1991, the Serbian government facilitated organizing an army of guerilla militias in almost every Serb majority district or village in Croatia. The next four years saw open warfare on two fronts.

When the JNA pulled south from Slovenia, most of it was re-stationed in Croatia and Bosnia. Most of the leaders still serving in the JNA at that point were Serbian. With the independence declaration, the Croatia National Guard units became the Croatian National Army (HVO), but did not have the pre-declaration planning or training that was in place and ready in Slovenia. The two “national” armies fought and, eventually, the HVO managed to push the JNA out of about 75 percent of the land of Croatia. However, in the Krajina area, the Serbian people formed their own militias and fought the newly formed Croatian militias tenaciously to keep their area part of Yugoslavia. Ethnic based atrocities were widely reported on both sides including attempts by the Serbians to kill or drive out all non-Serbs from the Krajina region and the eventual eviction of most of the Serbs from their homes. However, after the first three years, most of the active fighting had moved into Bosnia and the two-sided agreed to a cease-fire in February 1994. With the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords in December of 1995, Croatia became independent.

Not only was there active fighting between organized armies and air forces, violent atrocities were rampant on both sides. The dislike of the former Austro-Hungarians for the southern Serbian/Bosnian “tribes”, a dislike that had flamed into hatred during two world wars, was alive and well. There was a new constitution and

democratic elections. Reading through journal and media reports of the time, it appears that there was much hope for much change. There was some social change when a society that was 80 percent ethnically pure (and rarely went to church) ejected thousands of ethnic Serbs from their neighborhoods and returned to considering themselves Catholics. Despite 50 years of limited religion the society is certainly associated with the Christianity type that centered at the Vatican. The average Croat still lives the same way, but the remaining Muslims and Serbs that cannot produce detailed genealogy charts to prove they are ethnically Croatian, are cut off from most state services and cannot conduct most business in Croatia.

Dissolutions in the 1990s: Bosnia

The country of Bosnia-Herzegovina issued a statement of independence in December of 1991 and, following a public referendum in April 1992, President Izetbegovic declared Bosnia independent. Prior to the departure, Bosnian leaders tried very hard to keep Slovenia and Croatia in a confederal system to prevent being left alone and dominated by the two Serb majority states of Serbia and Montenegro. However, once the other three countries departed, the leadership felt that independence was the only road to avoid Serbian domination. Bosnia was the last country to do so successfully and it was the most violent and contested. The 1991 ethnic makeup was reportedly 43-44 percent Muslim, 31 percent Serbian, and 17 percent Croatian⁷ which made both Serbia and Croatia interested parties in protecting the interests of their ethnic brethren.

Fighting began throughout Bosnia on the day the European Union recognized Bosnia as an independent nation. The Yugoslavian National Army (JNA), now exclusively a Serbian force, began carving out huge enclaves of area to remain Serbian.

By mid-1992, the JNA controlled more than 60 percent of Bosnian land space.⁸ The HVO started the fight conducting the same operations in the north, intent on gaining more land for Croatia. However, the HVO was also forced to engage the JNA in northern Bosnia in order to retain any control over areas in the Krajina. Both sides in this conflict were intent on forcing anyone not of their ethnicity to depart the areas controlled by each army. Ethnic cleansing was most pronounced in Serbian controlled areas, but was certainly conducted by all sides in this three-way fight. Croat-Muslim rapprochement, officially recorded in an accord in March 1994, and NATO air-strikes in 1995 shifted the momentum of the fighting away from the Serbs and forced them to the negotiations table in November 1995. With the Dayton Peace Accords, signed in December 1991 and the subsequent introduction of 60,000 NATO troops to the country, the country of Bosnia was effectively independent.

This classically defined revolution was extremely violent. Over 1 million people were driven from their homes and thousands died in the fighting and subsequent ethnic cleansing. In Srebrenica alone, 7-8,000 men⁹ were gathered together by Bosnian Serb/Serb army forces and systematically killed. Prior to the war, no sane person would think it normal to kill all of your neighbors who did not have the correct final syllable to their name. By the end of the war, the fact that this happened had turned the racial tension in Bosnia into the racial hatred of the Croats for the Serbs. Resettling families into their former neighborhoods and homes was very hard. Even if no Bosnian Serb had settled into a Bosniac-owned home in Banja Luka or Vlasenica, the Bosnian Serbs that had lived around the home's location were willing to burn the house or building materials every

night. The same problem was true for the Bosnian Serbs who wanted to return to their homes in Zenica or Teslic.

Dissolutions in the 1990s: Republic of Srpska's Attempt

Following the official and enforced peace in Bosnia, two other attempts were made to create yet more countries independent of Yugoslavia/Serbia. While there were isolated events, Vojvodina did not make any serious attempt to break away from their controlling Serbian counterparts. In Bosnia, however, the portion controlled by ethnic Serbs did make serious attempts to become their own country with the stated goal of rejoining Serbia.

Following the 1994 cease-fire, but before NATO troops entered the country, soldiers in uniform and in organized units from both the HVO and the JNA were fighting to free and hold Serbian held territory in Bosnia. The Serbian justification was that these soldiers were Bosnian Serbs who were merely allowed to return to Bosnia from their duty locations in Serbia in order to defend their own homes. The Croat justification was the same. The attempt of the Bosnian Serbs to break away from Bosnia was unsuccessful.

The second attempt by the Republic of Srpska (RS) to become its own country was political in nature. The second election cycle for both the Bosnia tripartite presidency and the RS local governing officials resulted in the election of almost universally hard-line Bosnian Serb separatists. They included the re-election of Radovan Karadzic, the former leader of the military fight to "free" the RS, who (along with Radko Mladic) is still hunted by international law enforcement agencies because of his Hague war-crimes indictment. Because of the RS attempt to declare independence and not participate in the Bosnian political process, the United Nations' High Commissioner refused to interact

with the RS forcing NATO to enforcement the Dayton Peace Accords by military force. Elections had to be held again for the presidency and the RS was unable to separate from Bosnia in either of these ways.

Kosovo Attempts at Dissolution (1990-Present)

Tito's infamous willingness to suppress any non-Yugoslavian nationalism with army units led by officers from another republic was critical to his success in maintaining the stability of the country. However, the revised 1974 Yugoslav constitution granted broad autonomy to the Kosovo region despite the need to maintain this stability. The inhabitants, most of whom are Muslim ethnic Albanians, instituted Albanian-language schools and observed Islamic holidays.

In 1981, Albanian student demonstrations against the working and living conditions in Kosovo turned bloody, and Serbs and Montenegrins began to flee the province. Most scholars agree that this marked the beginning of the attempts by Albanians within Kosovo to become independent from Yugoslavia. When Slobodan Milosevic was elected president of Yugoslavia in 1987, on the popularity of his nationalist "Greater Yugoslavia" policy, he mandated that Yugoslavia would never dissolve. Ottomans forces destroyed the last of the Serbian princes who were capable of resisting their aggression on the Field of Blackbirds in 1389. It was no accident that he launched his campaign to restrain Kosovo on the Field of Blackbirds exactly 600 years later. His selfish manipulation of the nationalist Serbia hardliners allowed him to dominate political power and control Serbian actions. Because of separatist rumblings among Yugoslavia's ethnic Albanian community, Milosevic's government declared

martial law on 1 February 1990, which stripped the Kosovo province of its autonomy and sent the army and police to maintain order.¹⁰

Kosovo Attempts at Dissolution: Recent, but Pre-Terror History

In February 1998, Milosevic sent troops into the areas controlled by the developing resistance movement called the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), destroying property and killing 80 Kosovar civilians. The killings provoked riots in Pristina, the Kosovar capital and a guerrilla war ensued. Later, in May, Milosevic and Democratic League of Kosovo politician Ibrahim Rugova, the advocate of a peaceful path to independence for Kosovo, held talks for first time. Both sides refused to retreat from irreconcilable positions regarding the independence of Kosovo from Serbian and the Albanian side boycotted further meetings from that point on. In July and August, KLA guerrillas seized control of 40 percent of Kosovo before being defeated by a Serb offensive when the actual Serbian Army became involved in combat operations. In September 1988, Serb forces attacked and re-secured central Kosovo, where 22 Albanians were later found massacred. The U.N. Security Council called for an immediate cease-fire and political dialogue. In October, when NATO authorized air strikes against Serb military targets, Milosevic agreed to withdraw troops, facilitated the return of refugees and accepted unarmed international monitors from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). When the Serbian forces withdrew, the KLA immediately moved to retake territory it had recently lost to the Army of Yugoslavia (VJ). While U.S. envoy Christopher Hill tried to broker political settlement from October through December, daily violence undermined the fragile truce and violent attacks by both parties occurred throughout December.

In 1999, the fighting continued and the OSCE and other international officials began to demand a war crimes investigation. On 29 January, Serb police killed 24 Kosovo Albanians in a raid on a suspected rebel hideout, prompting Western allies to demand that warring sides attend the Kosovo peace conference or face NATO air strikes. Thus, from 6 February through the 17th the first round of talks between Kosovo Albanians and Serbs occurred in Rambouillet, France. When the Serbs refused to consider armed NATO peacekeepers in Kosovo, the Kosovars agreed to sign, thus appearing to be cooperative. In one of the most acrimonious exchanges, a series of daytime bombings on March 13 killed seven people and injured dozens, all ethnic Albanians, in the government-held towns of Kosovska Mitrovica and Podujevo. Each side accused the other and this is still the most often cited example of KLA violence towards ethnic Albanians focused on shaping Western Allied views against Serbia.

When the second round of talks resumed in Paris on 15 March, the Kosovo Albanians confirmed to international officials that they were ready to sign the peace agreement outlined in the Rambouillet proposal. On 18 March, the Kosovo Albanians did sign a peace calling for interim broad autonomy and for 28,000 NATO troops to implement it. The Serb delegation refused to sign the accord and the talks were suspended. Following the suspension of talks, the unarmed OSCE observers evacuated on 20 March, citing security concerns and the possibility of NATO air strikes. Meanwhile Richard Holbrooke went to Belgrade on 22 March for a last-ditch bid to convince Milosevic to accept the accord. In a much publicized move on 23 March, Milosevic presented the NATO proposal to parliament, which solidly rejected the accord based on NATO demands to send armed peacekeeping troops into Kosovo. The next day, NATO

launched the first air strikes against Serbia and in support of the “Kosovo Liberation Army.”

Kosovo Attempts at Dissolution: During and Post-Strike History

During the first week of NATO air strikes, Yugoslavia broke off diplomatic relations with NATO countries contributing forces to the attack while Albania offered its facilities to NATO troops and aircraft. During the second week, Yugoslav forces began forcing ethnic Albanians from their villages, executing the men and boys, and burning down homes. By the third week, 912,000 Kosovo Albanians had been displaced because of the conflict.

During the fifth week, though, two separate military factions of ethnic Albanians were announced. One was the KLA, whose commander Hashim Thaci had become a political representative. The other was a new “Armed Forces of Republic of Kosovo (AFRK),” loyal to Bujar Bukoshi, a supporter of pacifist leader Ibrahim Rugova. After several arms caches belonging to the KLA had been found in Macedonia, Macedonia's Interior Minister, in a major destabilizing announcement that frightened Western European countries, accused Kosovo's Albanian separatists of intending to spread their war to Macedonia once they had achieved independence for their presently Serbian province. Finally, during that week, the UN's International War Crimes Tribunal formally indicted Milosevic (and four other Yugoslav officials) for crimes against humanity.

On June 9th, Yugoslavia and the Western allies signed the treaty that mandated the withdrawal of Serbian army and special police troops from Kosovo, followed by the subsequent stopping of the NATO air campaign. Following this, an international peacekeeping force, headed by NATO, entered Kosovo and refugees began to return.

During the following weeks and months, NATO and UN organizations entered the Kosovo province and established peace and a new, internationally run government. That internationally run government is still currently operating the province's legal system, its border control, etcetera in a manner that allowed Kosovo to maintain autonomy without enabling it to gain independence as many inhabitants desired during the war. Within Kosovo, Ibrahim Rugova was elected as "president" by the Kosovar parliament in February 2002 after ethnic Albanian parties finally came to a power-sharing arrangement where Bajram Rexhepi became their "prime minister". In October of 2003, direct Serbian to Kosovo talks occurred for the first time since 1999. In December of that year, the UN set 2005 as the year for "final status" discussions to occur. Final status has still not been resolved and, with Rugova's death in January 2006, political leadership is factionalized, making it less likely to occur in the near future. In July 2006, meetings between the political leaders of Serbia and Kosovo reinforced the intractability of the situation when Serbia announced they would welcome any solution that did not include independence and the Kosovo leaders stated that only statehood would be acceptable to the Kosovar people¹¹

The KLA wanted, and still would like, to have the option to join Albania as a province. There was never any formal announcement from Albania (that this author can find) stating that it would admit the province of Kosovo into the country of Albania, their overwhelming support for NATO attacks on the VJ indicated that they would, at least, entertain the idea. In 2006, the fight to become an independent republic or a province of Albania is not over for the KLA or the Kosovar Albanians, but the KLA was adamant in their assertions that the conflict between Albanians and Serbs was not merely a religious

war. Although religious differences played a role in shaping the outlook of both sides (the Serbs are of the Eastern Orthodox Church, while the Kosovar Albanians are Muslim), religion is just one aspect of many differences between the Kosovar Albanians and Serbs. The two peoples have different origins, histories, cultures and languages.

Dissolution in 2006: Montenegro

Finally, the Republic of Montenegro has also seceded from the former Yugoslavia. In a remarkable departure from most of the other states, Montenegro had an entirely peaceful referendum regarding separation. Despite the intense fear of the return to war felt during the initial Montenegrin moves towards separation in 1999 and again in 2001, there was neither internal nor external violence surrounding the referendum.

On 21 May 2006, 55.5 percent of voters chose independence, with more than 82 percent participation. According to the agreements between Serbia and Montenegro wherein the two republics formally changed from the “Former Yugoslav Republics” to the country of Serbia and Montenegro, either republic was legally permitted to declare independence if it was the will of its population. Thus, on June 3rd, Montenegro declared independence and ended the 88-year association with Serbia since Montenegro joined the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes after World War I. On June 12th, the European Union recognized the new nation and the United States followed on June 15th.¹²

Analysis of Modern Nations in the Balkans

Examining a modern map of what was Yugoslavia shows six nations where there was formerly only one. These six nations align very similarly to the six major Slav tribes

that entered the region in the 6th and 7th centuries. The Slovenians' referendum in December 1990 resulted in secession in June 1991. The Croatia referendum of May 1991 led to four years of war starting in June of 1991 and ending with the 1995 Dayton Peace Accords. Macedonia's vote for independence in September 1991 resulted in a bloodless independence resulting in UN membership as early as April 1993. The Bosnian-Herzegovinan referendum in March of 1992 led to their four years of fighting that also ended with the Dayton Peace Accords. The Republic of Srpska and the region of Kosovo both failed to achieve independence despite their willingness to resort to terrorist tactics and commit significant war crimes. Finally, Montenegro calmly declared independence following a successful vote of more than 82 percent of its populace and have already joined in the European Union ahead of all of these nations except Slovenia.

This rapid dissolution into component republics so similar to the tribally-based principalities of the pre-Ottoman years may astound many modern observers. However, examined historically, it seems not only logical but also inevitable. In a region full of people who have consistently refused to be governed in any manner that did not include overwhelming force, the intervention of the modern superpowers to prevent use of overwhelming force resulted in the logical chain of events leading to a return to small independent tribal-sized nations.

Comparison of Modern Results to Historical Analysis

It is easy for a researcher to choose facts and details selectively so that they match the desired end goal or the point of the monograph. In this case, however, the benefit of hindsight and recent lessons learned allow the reader to see that the analysis of earlier conflicts is correct. It is important for a modern commander to understand that this region

is a major intersection of multiple cultures occurring repeatedly throughout history. This being one of the most ethnically diverse regions of the world, it has undergone millenniums of compression where only the fiercest and most vociferous defenders of the tribe survived. This conflict, observable from ancient times, continued through multiple ages, several empires and even the religious changes. As mentioned earlier, the Bogomil “heresy” of the Bosnian tribes vied against both the Bulgarian/Greek Orthodox beliefs and the Catholic Christian beliefs of their northern neighbors. Later, Islam fought the same battles. The importance of religion in the area can be overstated, but despite nearly identical appearances and early cultural histories, these divisions of religion and ethnicity are very real in the mind of the people.

The definition of ethnicity via religious affiliation that occurred in the Croatian and Bosnian wars to separate from Yugoslavia demonstrates that this continues to modern times. Discrimination based on this ethnicity was seen in the Interwar period and was seen when Croatia established its new borders. A US commander must expect this to occur in the future. The concept that a group of people should cooperate towards the greater good of more than their tribe or ethnicity or nation seems beyond their comprehension. Because they came from different tribes hundreds of years earlier, or because they worshiped the same God differently, they find nothing odd about exploiting their power to another’s detriment. Thus, a military leader going to the Balkans should be aware that the perception of previous wrongs is a powerful motivator of continued or resumed hostilities or fighting. The various viewpoints of the people and the separation of fact from understanding are demonstrated in recent conflicts as well.

The use of nationalistic rhetoric to incite violence against neighbors and neighboring states is clear when looking at modern conflicts to dissolve Yugoslavia. Despite the difference in facts seen in US historical references, discussions with modern Slovene and Bosnian field-grade staff officers demonstrate that what they are taught of previous conflicts by parents, grandparents or schools is different from US understanding. Their “knowledge” forms the basis from which they make decisions, despite examinations of respected reference works. Disagreements between their “knowledge” and the reference authors’ “knowledge” are perceived as being the result of the ethnic bias of the author. Even when modern commanders take special care to examine the viewpoint in modern books and articles, it is important to understand that the citizens of the Balkan country may never change their beliefs. Balkans’ personal interaction with how they understand their history cause a significant coloring of their perspective, but can also be seen in the differences between externally proposed solutions and the solutions desired by local leaders.

Following Great Power intervention and militarily enforced treaties in the Twentieth century, it would seem that the fights over land would be outdated. Modern-day events have shown that the passage of time does not overcome the beliefs of the people living in the area. None of the Balkan nations were happy with the Treaty of Berlin in 1878. None of the Yugoslavian nations were satisfied with the Communist enforced solution that kept the peace for 50 years. As chapter 4 describes, however, controlling the people who live in this region is very, very challenging. Even tens of thousands of troops and extreme retaliation measures did not prevent violent resistance to Nazi occupation. The communist government of Yugoslavia instituted draconian control

of public information and cultural education for 50 years, yet within 10 years, rhetoric had brought old beliefs to the fore-front and the conflict resumed. A new externally proposed solution has been imposed on the hot spot of the region, but expectations of long term stability may be certain to disappoint.

Writers, thinkers and politicians of the late twentieth century proposed three main “explanations” for the renewed conflict in the former Republic of Yugoslavia. Travel writers, journalists and some US politicians believed that the renewal of ancient ethnic hatreds caused the sudden, spontaneous rekindling of armed conflict¹³. While the “proof” of ethnic hatreds is easy to see in an overview of the region, they are insufficient to explain such a virulent explosion of violence. Another common supposition in the 1990s was the belief that the fighting was a clash of ancient civilizations. Samuel P. Huntington’s now-famous article “The Clash of Civilizations”¹⁴ suggests that entire civilizations had been buried under pressure of Communist ideology until they could fight free and re-emerge. Franjo Tudjman, first president of re-emerged Croatia and self-nominated Nobel Historian, spent many speeches and much political capital promoting his theory that Croatia was long the bastion of Christian resistance to the insidious attacks of Islam from the southeast.¹⁵ While it would be nice to believe that whole cultures or civilizations could remain pure and unchanged for dozens, or even hundreds or thousands, of years while they waited to emerge again, the reality is much more complicated than that. Finally, the third theory suggested that external meddlers in local politics caused the wars of dissolution. Whether an author was declaiming failures of Great Power intervention at the Treaty of Versailles¹⁶ or asserting that Germany’s quick recognition of Slovenia and Croatia as nation-states caused the turmoil¹⁷, this third theory also fails to include the

critical facts that military leaders operating in the Balkans must know. The Balkan mentality and their perceptions of history, like other long-standing conflict regions, are merely factors in reacting to unscrupulous politicians who exploit history and myth to their own benefit.

Self-interest and power is clearly the controlling motivator of political leaders. The inability of Balkan leaders to compromise is seen as a constant thread through historical conflicts and recent internecine warfare. Political willingness to encourage murder of neighbors based on ethnicity, perception of previous wrongs or religious beliefs is inherently incompatible with what a modern US military commander would think is logical. But, a US military leader must approach the Balkans understanding that he or she will see what appears to be discrimination, that Balkan leaders accept historical facts based on beliefs instead of observable facts and they will appear to resist most compromise for the greater good. Not only are characteristics of leaders facts in the Balkans, such characteristics do not appear to be particularly troublesome to the people there. Leaders in the Balkans are formed by the history, as they understand it, and holding on to everything they can for their tribe is an admirable trait. This may also be true in other high-conflict, regions like the Northern Iraq, the Caucasus and Afghanistan where mountains, ethnicities and religions create these economic, social and cultural fault-lines. Unfortunately, for a US military leader forced to operate there, it makes things challenging.

¹Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris, *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide*, (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 5-12.

² Marc Weller, "The International Response to the Dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia" *The American Journal of International Law* 86 3 (Jul., 1992): 570

³ Sekelj Laslo, "Parties and Elections: The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia: Change without Transformation" *Europe-Asia Studies* 52 1 (Jan., 2000): 57

⁴ *ibid*, 57.

⁵ Republic of Slovenia Public Relations and Media Office, "War for Slovenia 1991," available at <http://www.ukom.gov.si/10years/path/war/>; accessed 15 May 2007.

⁶ Loring M. Danforth, "Claims to Macedonian Identity: The Macedonian Question and the Breakup of Yugoslavia", *Anthropology Today* 9 4 (Aug., 1993): 5, 6.

⁷ Unattributed, "Ethnic Composition of Key Areas in Bosnia (Unclassified)", (RAF Molesworth: Joint Analysis Center, 1995).

⁸ *Ibid*.

⁹ Eric Husher, "Balkan Conflict Current History (U)," RAF Molesworth: Joint Analysis Center, 1995

¹⁰ Michael Kraig, "Kosovo: The Long Road to War, A Chronology 1988-1991" British American Security Information Council, available at <http://www.basicint.org/europe/confprev/Kosovo/timeline1.htm>; accessed 20 May 2007.

¹¹ Alissa J. Rubin, "Serbia, Kosovo Leaders Meet, Remain Split on Independence" *Los Angeles Times*, July 25, 2006.

¹² U.S. Department of State, "United States Establishes Diplomatic Relations with Montenegro: Former part of Serbia and Montenegro declared independence June 3", Bureau of International Information Programs, US State Department available at <http://usinfo.state.gov>; accessed August 20, 2006.

¹³ Robert D. Kaplan, "Reading Too Much Into a Book." *New York Times*, June 13, 1999, 4-17.

¹⁴ Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations," *Foreign Affairs* 72 (Summer 1993): 22.

¹⁵ Chris Hedges, "Croatia's President Polishes a National Myth." *New York Times*, June 28, 1999, A-9.

¹⁶ Harold J. Tobin, "The Role of the Great Powers in Treaty Revision", *The American Journal of International Law* 28 3 (July, 1934): 496.

¹⁷ Carl Cavanagh Hodge, “Botching the Balkans: Germany's Recognition of Slovenia and Croatia”, *Ethics & International Affairs* 12 1 (1998): 1, 18.

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